

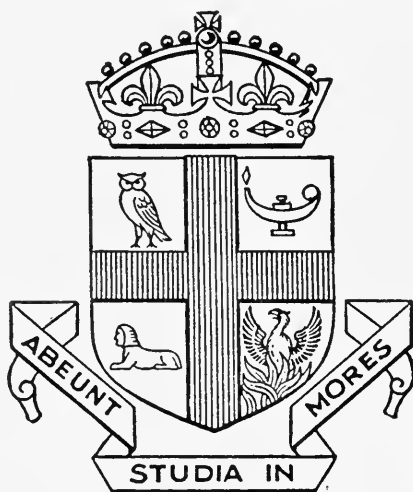
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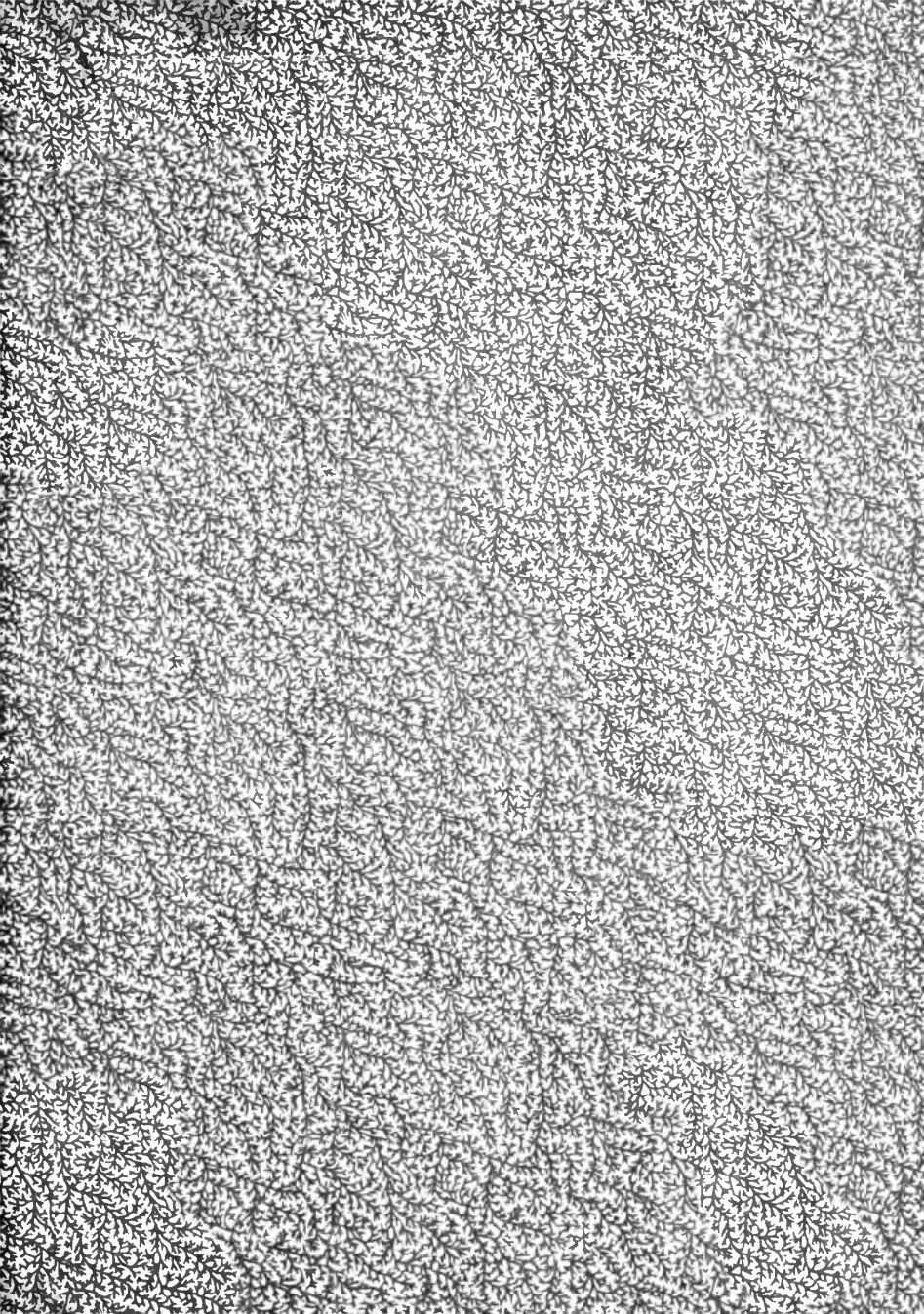
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LES MISERABLES

MARIUS

VOL. III.





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LES MISÉRABLES

BY

VICTOR HUGO

Marius' first meeting with Cosette

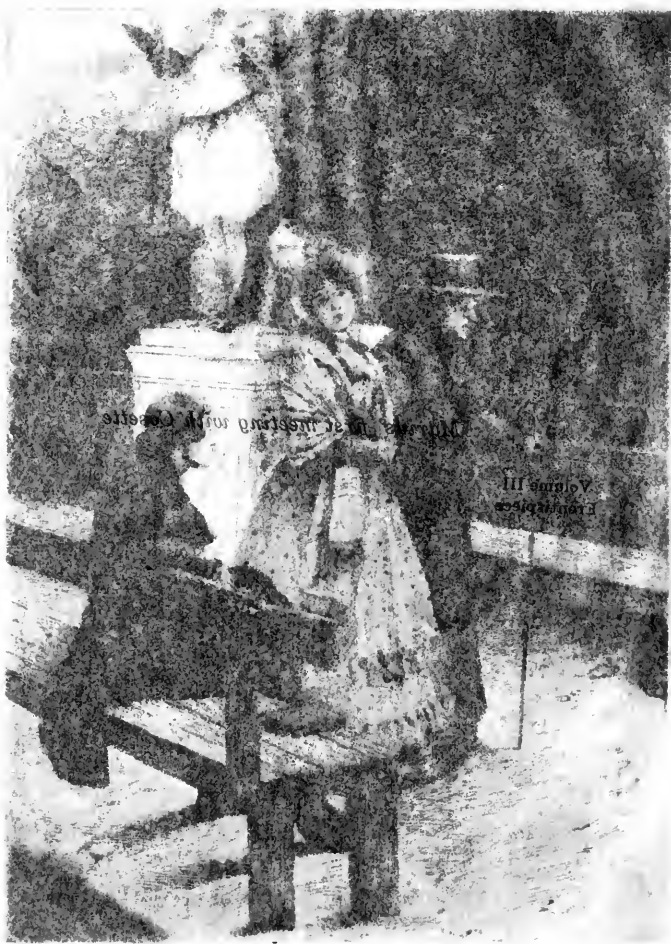
Volume III
Frontispiece



Number 3

MARIUS

Bigelow, Smith & Company
New York



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LES MISÉRABLES

BY

VICTOR HUGO



Volume 3

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Bigelow, Smith & Company
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MARIUS

BOOK I

STUDY OF AN ATOM OF PARIS

CHAPTER I

PARVULUS

PARIS has a child, and the forest has a bird; the bird is called a sparrow, the child is called a gutter-snipe.

Couple these two ideas, which contain the one all the furnace, the other all the dawn; bring the two sparks, Paris and childhood, into collision, and a little being springs from them, — *homuncio*, as Plautus would say.

This little being is joyous; he does not eat every day, and he goes to the theatre every night if he thinks proper. He has no shirt on his body, no shoes on his feet, and no roof over his head; he is like the flies of heaven, which have none of those things. He is from seven to thirteen years of age, lives in bands, lodges in the open air, wears an old pair of his father's trousers, which descend lower than his heels, an old hat belonging to some other father, which comes below his ears, and one yellow list brace. He runs, lies in wait, begs, kills time, colours pipes, swears like a fiend, haunts the wine-

shop, knows thieves, speaks familiarly to street-girls, talks slang, sings filthy songs, and has no evil in his heart; for he has in his soul a pearl, Innocence; and pearls are not to be dissolved by mud. So long as man is a child, God wills that he shall be innocent.

If we were to ask the enormous city, "What is this creature?" it would reply, "It is my little one."

CHAPTER II

SOME OF HIS PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS

THE gutter-snipe of Paris is the dwarf of the giantess. Let us not exaggerate. This cherub of the gutter has sometimes a shirt, but if so, has only one; he sometimes has shoes, but then they have no soles; he has sometimes a home, and likes it, for he finds his mother there; but he prefers the street, because he finds liberty there. He has games of his own, and tricks of his own, based on hatred of the shopkeeping class, and he has metaphors of his own: thus, to be dead and buried, he calls, "*eating dandelions by the root.*" He has trades of his own,—fetching hackney coaches, opening carriage doors, collecting toll for ferriage across the streets, in heavy storms, which he calls "building the *Pont des Arts*," crying speeches made by the authorities in favor of the French people, and cleaning out the cracks in the pavement. He has also a currency of his own, composed of all the little pieces of wrought copper that can be picked up in the streets. This curious money, which takes the name of "rags," has an unvarying and well-established value in this childish Bohemia.

Lastly, he has a fauna of his own, which he studiously observes in every hole and corner,—the lady-bird, the death's-head moth, the daddy long-legs, and the "devil," a black insect which threatens by wriggling its tail, armed with two

horns. He has his fabulous monster, which has scales on its belly, but is not a lizard, and spots on its back, but is not a toad; it lives in holes in old limekilns and dried-up wells; it is black, hairy, slimy, and crawls about, at one moment slowly, at another quickly; it utters no sound, but glares, and is so terrible that no one has ever seen it. This monster he calls the "deaf-one," and looking for it under stones is a pleasure of a dreadful nature. Another pleasure is to raise a paving-stone suddenly and look at the wood-lice. Each region of Paris is celebrated for the interesting "finds" which may be made in it; thus, there are earwigs in the timber-yards of the Ursulines, centipedes in the Pantheon, and tadpoles in the ditches of the Champs de Mars.

As for witticisms, this child is as full of them as Talleyrand; but, though no less cynical, he is more honest. He is gifted with indescribable and unforeseen joviality, and startles the shopkeeper by his mad laugh. His range extends from genteel comedy to farce.

A funeral passes, and among the persons following is a physician. "Hullo!" shouts a gutter-snipe, "when did doctors begin to carry home their own work?"

Another is in a crowd. A serious man, adorned with spectacles and watch-seals, turns indignantly: "You scoundrel, what do you mean by seizing my wife's waist?"

"I, sir? Search me!"

CHAPTER III

HE IS AGREEABLE

AT night, thanks to a few half-pence which he always contrives to procure, the *homuncio* enters a theatre. On crossing this magical threshold, he is transfigured; he was a gutter-snipe, and he becomes a *titi*.¹ Theatres are like over-

¹ Chicken: slang term, taken from the sound made in calling poultry.

turned vessels, which have their hold in the air; and the *titis* congregate in the hold. The *titi* is to the gutter-snipe, what the butterfly is to the chrysalis,—the same being, but now flying and hovering. It is enough for him to be there, with his radiant happiness, his power of enthusiasm and delight, and the clapping of his hands, which resembles the flapping of wings; the narrow, fetid, obscure, dirty, unhealthy, hideous, abominable hold at once becomes paradise.¹

Give a being what is useless and deprive him of what is necessary, and you will have the gutter-snipe.

He is not devoid of literary instinct. His tastes — we confess it with all proper regret — are not classic. He is by nature but little of an academician.

This creature bawls, chaffs, squabbles, and fights; wears patches like a baby, and rags like a philosopher; fishes in the gutter, sports in the sewers, extracts gayety from filth, scourges the town with his wit, grins and bites, whistles and sings, applauds and hisses, tempers Hallelujah with Matanturlurette, hums every known tune, from De Profundis to the Anvil Chorus, finds without looking, knows his own ignorance, is a Spartan even to filching, foolish even to wisdom, lyrical even to filth, would sprawl on Olympus, wallows in the dung-heap, and emerges from it covered with stars. The gutter-snipe of Paris is Rabelais in his youth.

He is not satisfied with his trousers, unless they have watch-pockets.

He is not easily surprised, and still less easily frightened; he sings down superstitions, takes the wind out of exaggerations, mocks at mysteries, puts out his tongue at ghosts, takes the poetry out of high flown metaphors, and introduces caricature into the most serious affairs. It is not that he is prosaic,—far from it; but he substitutes a farcical phantasmagoria for solemn vision. If Adamastor were to appear to him, the gutter-snipe would say, “Hullo, old Bogy!”

¹ Anglice: gallery gods, nigger heaven.

CHAPTER IV

HE MAY BE USEFUL

PARIS begins with the loafer and ends with the gutter-snipe,—two beings of which no other city is capable; the passive acceptance which is satisfied with looking, and the inexhaustible initiative,—Prudhomme and Fouillou. Paris alone has this in its natural history; all monarchy is contained in the loafer, all anarchy in the gutter-snipe.

This pale child of the Paris faubourgs lives and develops, makes ties and looses them in suffering, a thoughtful witness in the presence of social realities and human things. He believes himself reckless, but he is not; he looks on, ready to laugh, but also ready for something else. Whoever you may be, if your name be Prejudice, Abuse, Ignominy, Oppression, Iniquity, Despotism, Injustice, Fanaticism, or Tyranny, beware of the gaping gutter-snipe.

This little fellow will grow.

Of what clay is he made? Of any dirt that comes to hand. Take a handful of mud, a breath, and you have Adam. It is sufficient for a God to pass; and a God has ever passed over the gutter-snipe. Fortune toils for this little being, though by the word fortune we mean to some extent, luck. Will this pigmy, moulded of coarse common clay, ignorant, illiterate, bewildered, vulgar, low, become an Ionian or a Bæotian? Wait awhile, *currit rota*, and the genius of Paris, that demon which creates the children of chance and the men of destiny, will reverse the process of the Latin potter, and make an amphora of the earthen jar.

CHAPTER V

HIS BOUNDARIES

THE gutter-snipe loves the town, but he loves solitude as well; for there is something of the sage in him. He is *urbis amator* like Fuscus, and *ruris amator* like Flaccus.

To wander about dreamily,—that is, to loaf,—is an excellent employment of time for a philosopher, particularly in that somewhat artificial country, ugly enough, but odd and composed of two natures, that surrounds certain large cities, and notably Paris. To study the suburbs is to study the amphibious,—the trees end and the roofs begin; the grass ends and the pavement begins; the furrows end and the shops begin; the ruts end and the passions begin; the divine murmur ends and human reason begins, and all is extraordinarily interesting.

Such is the motive of the apparently objectless strolls of the dreamer in those unattractive parts, which the passer-by at once brands with the epithet, “dreary.”

The author of these lines was for a long time a prowler about the suburbs of Paris, and it is a source of profound memories for him. The worn grass, the stony path, the chalk, the marl, the plaster, the rough monotony of waste and fallow land, the young plants in the market-garden suddenly seen in a hollow, the mixture of the wild and the tame, the vast desert nooks where the garrison drummers hold their noisy practising, producing a sort of stammer of battle, these deep solitudes by day and cut-throat dens by night, the clumsy mill turning in the wind, the windlasses of the quarries, the wine-shops at the corners of the cemeteries, the mysterious charm of the tall dark walls cutting at right angles immense open fields bathed in sunshine and full of butterflies,—all this attracted him.

Hardly any one on earth knows those singular spots, the

Glacière, the Cimette, the hideous wall of Grenelle pock-marked with bullets, Mont Parnasse, the Fosse aux Loups, Les Aubiers on the bank of the Marne, Mont Souris, the Tombe Issoire, or the Pierre Plate de Chatillon, where there is an old exhausted quarry, which is now used only for growing mushrooms, and is closed by a trap door of rotten boards flush with the ground. The Campagna of Rome is one idea, and the outskirts of Paris another. To see in what a horizon offers us nought but fields, houses, or trees, is to remain on the surface; for all aspects of things are thoughts of God. The spot where a plain forms its junction with a town is always stamped with a peculiar, penetrating melancholy; for Nature and humanity appeal to you simultaneously, and local peculiarities make their appearance there.

Any one who has wandered as we have, in those solitudes contiguous to the suburbs, which may be called the limbos of Paris, has seen here and there, in the most deserted spot, and at the most unexpected moment, behind a scrubby hedge, or in the corner of some melancholy wall, children grouped tumultuously, fetid, muddy, dusty, unkempt, and ragged, playing ring-taw, crowned with corn-flowers. They are the little runagates of poor families. This outer boulevard is their breathing-place; the outskirts belong to them, and they eternally play truant there. There they ingenuously sing their repertory of unclean songs. There they are, or, to speak more correctly, there they dwell, far from any eye, in the gentle warmth of May or June. Circling round a hole in the ground, snapping marbles with thumb and fingers, squabbling for farthings, irresponsible, airy, free, and happy; no sooner do they see you, than they remember that they have a trade and must earn their living, and they offer to sell you an old woollen stocking full of May-bugs or a spray of lilac. Such a meeting with chance children is one of the charming and yet heart-rending charms of the environs of Paris.

Sometimes there are girls among the crowd of boys,—are they their sisters?—almost grown up, thin, feverish, sun-burned, and freckled, crowned with wheat-ears and poppies;

gay, haggard, and barefooted. You may see them eating cherries among the wheat, and at night hear them laugh. These groups, warmly illumined by the bright light of midday, or dimly seen in the twilight, long occupy the dreamer; and these visions mingle with his musings.

Paris is the centre, the suburb is the circumference; it is the whole earth to these children. They never venture beyond it, and can no more escape from the Parisian atmosphere than fish can exist out of water. For them there is nothing two leagues beyond the barriers; Ivry, Gentilly, Arcueil, Belleville, Aubervilliers, Ménilmontant, Choisy le Roi, Billancourt, Meudon, Issy, Vanvres, Sevres, Puteaux, Neuilly, Gennevilliers, Colombes, Romainville, Chatou, Asnières, Bougival, Nanterre, Enghien, Noisy-le-sec, Nogent, Gournay, Drancy, and Gonesse,—their universe ends there.

CHAPTER VI

A SMALL BIT OF HISTORY

AT the almost contemporary period, when this story happened, there was not, as there is now, a policeman at every street-corner (a blessing which we have no time to discuss), and lost children abounded in Paris. Statistics give us an average of two hundred and sixty homeless children, picked up annually by the police of that day, in unenclosed fields, in houses in process of building, and under the arches of bridges. One of these nests, which became famous, produced “the swallows of the Pont d’Arcole.” This, by the way, is the most disastrous of social symptoms; for all the crimes of the man begin with the vagabondage of the child.

We must except Paris, however. In a relative degree, and, in spite of the memory which we have just evoked, the exception is a just one. While in any other great city, a vagabond

child is a ruined man, while nearly everywhere the boy left to himself is, to some extent, sacrificed and given over to a sort of fatal immersion in public vice, which destroys honour and conscience within him, the gutter-snipe of Paris, though outwardly marred and dented, is inwardly almost intact. It is a magnificent thing to put on record, and one which shines forth in the splendid probity of our popular revolutions, that a certain incorruptibility results from the idea which exists in the atmosphere of Paris, as from the salt which exists in the waters of the ocean. To breathe Paris preserves the soul.

But what we have just stated, does not in any way decrease the heart-pang which we feel every time we meet one of these lads, around whom we fancy that we can see the threads of a broken family fluttering. In our present civilization, which is still so incomplete, it is no very uncommon thing to see families thus broken up emptying themselves into the darkness, not knowing what has become of their children, and allowing their own offspring to fall upon the public highway. Hence these obscure destinies. This sad state of affairs has become proverbial, and is known as "being cast on the pavement of Paris."

Let us remark parenthetically that such desertion of children was not discouraged under the ancient monarchy. A little of the Bohemian and Egyptian element in the lower classes suited the higher spheres, and the powerful profited by it. Hatred of national education was a dogma; of what good were "half-lights"? Such was the countersign. Now, the vagabond child is the corollary of the ignorant child.

Besides, the monarchy sometimes wanted children, and then it skimmed the streets.

In the reign of Louis XIV., to go no further back, the king wished, rightly enough, to create a fleet. The idea was good, but let us look at the means. No fleet is possible unless you have beside the sailing vessel, that plaything of the winds, vessels which can be sent wherever may be necessary, or be used as tugs, impelled by oars or steam; and in those

days galleys were to the navy what steam-vessels now are. Hence galleys were needed; but galleys are only moved by the galley-slave, and hence the latter must be procured. Colbert ordered the governors of provinces, and the parliaments, to produce as many convicts as they could; and the magistrates displayed great complaisance in the matter. A man kept on his hat when a procession passed; that was a Huguenot attitude, and he was sent to the galleys. A boy was found in the streets; provided that he was fifteen years of age, and had no place to sleep, he was sent to the galleys. It was a great reign,—a great age.

In the reign of Louis XV., children disappeared in Paris. The police carried them off, and no one knew for what mysterious purpose. Monstrous conjectures were whispered as to the king's purple baths. It sometimes happened that when boys ran short, the exempts seized such as had parents; and the parents in their despair attacked the exempts. In such a case, Parliament interfered and hanged—whom? The exempts? No; the fathers.

CHAPTER VII

THE GUTTER-SNIPE WOULD HAVE HIS PLACE IN THE CASTES OF INDIA

THE Parisian gutter-snipe almost constitutes a caste; and we might perhaps say, Not every boy who wishes to belong to it can do so.

The word gutter-snipe (*gamin*) was printed for the first time, and passed from the popular speech into literature, in 1834. It made its first appearance in a work called "Claude Gueux;" the scandal was great, but the word has remained.

The elements that constitute the consideration of gutter-snipes for one another are very various. We knew and as-

sociated with one who was greatly respected and admired because he had seen a man fall from the top of the towers of Notre-Dame; another, because he had managed to enter the backyard where the statues of the dome of the Invalides were temporarily deposited, and "cribbed" lead from them; another, because he had seen a diligence upset; another, because he "knew" a soldier who had all but put out the eye of a civilian.

This explains the exclamation of the Parisian gutter-snipe, at which the vulgar laughed without understanding its depth: "Good gracious, how unlucky I am! Just think that I never saw anybody fall from a fifth floor!"

Assuredly it was a neat remark of a peasant: "Father So-and-so, your wife has died of her illness; why did you not send for a doctor?" "What would you have, sir? We poor people 'die of ourselves.'" But if all the passiveness of the peasant is contained in this remark, all the free-thinking anarchy of the child of the suburbs will be found in the following: A man condemned to death is listening to the confessor in the cart, and the child of Paris protests, "He is talking to his 'parson.' Oh, the sneak!"

A certain audacity in religious matters sets off the gutter-snipe. It is important to be strong-minded.

To be present at executions is a duty. He points at the guillotine and laughs. He calls it by all sorts of pet names, — End of the Soup; the Grumbler; Mother in the Blue (the sky); the Last Mouthful, etc. In order to lose none of the sight, he climbs walls, scales balconies, mounts trees, hangs to gratings, clings to chimney-pots. The gutter-snipe is a born slater, as he is a born sailor; and he has no more fear of a roof than of a mast. No holiday comes up to an execution on the Grève; Samson and the Abbé Montès are the truly popular names. The sufferer is hooted to encourage him, and is sometimes admired. Lacenaire, when a gutter-snipe, seeing the frightful Dautun die bravely, uttered a remark in which lay a future: "I was jealous of him." In the community of gutter-snipes, Voltaire is unknown, but Papavoine is fa-

mous. Politicians and murderers are mingled in the same legend, and traditions exist as to the last garments of all. They know that Tolleron wore a night cap, Avril a fur cap, Louvel a round hat; that old Delaporte was bald and bare-headed, Castaing rosy-cheeked and good-looking, and that Bories had a romantic beard; Jean Martin kept his braces on; and Le-couffé and his mother abused each other. "Don't quarrel about your basket," a gutter-snipe shouted to them. Another little fellow climbed up a lamp-post on the quay, in order to get a glimpse of Debacker as he passed; and a policeman posted there frowned at him. "Let me climb up, Mr. Policeman;" and to soften the man in authority, he added: "I shall not fall." "What do I care whether you fall or not?" replied the policeman.

Among gutter-snipes a memorable accident is highly esteemed, and a lad attains the summit of consideration if he gives himself a deep cut "to the bone."

The fist is no small element of respect; and one of the things which a gutter-snipe is very fond of saying is, "I am precious strong." To be left-handed renders you enviable, while squinting is held in great esteem.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ANECDOTE OF THE LAST KING

IN summer the gutter-snipe is metamorphosed into a frog, and leaps off the coal-barges and the washer-women's boats in front of the Jean and Austerlitz bridges into the Seine and into all possible infractions of the laws of decency. Still, the police are on the watch, and hence results a highly dramatic situation, which once gave rise to a fraternal and memorable cry. This cry, which became celebrated about 1830, is a strategic warning from boy to boy; it scans like a verse

of Homer, with a notation almost as indescribable as the Eleusiac song of the Panathenæa, and in it we may trace the ancient Evohé,—“Hullo, Titi, hullo, ho, here comes the cop; pick up your duds, and be off through the sewer!”

Sometimes this gnat—that is the name he gives himself—can read, sometimes he can write and daub after a fashion. He does not hesitate to acquire, by some mysterious mutual instruction, all the talents which may be useful to the public cause. From 1815 to 1830 he imitated the cry of a turkey; from 1830 to 1848 he scratched pears upon every wall. One summer evening, Louis Philippe, returning home on foot, saw a very little scamp, no bigger than that, sweating in his efforts to raise himself high enough to draw a gigantic pear with charcoal on one pillar of the Neuilly gates; and the king, with that kindness which he inherited from Henri IV., helped the boy, finished the pear and gave him a louis, saying, “The pear is on that too.”

The gutter-snipe loves a commotion, and any violent uproar pleases him. He hates priests. One day a young rascal was seen putting his thumb and finger to his nose at the gateway of No. 69, Rue de l'Université. “Why are you doing that to that gate?” a passer-by asked; the lad answered, “A priest lives there.” The Papal Nuncio, in fact, resided there.

Still, however great the gutter-snipe's Voltaireanism may be, if the opportunity is offered him to be a chorister, he may possibly accept, and in that case serves Mass civilly. There are two things of which he is the Tantalus, and which he constantly desires without ever being able to attain them,—to overthrow the government and to have his trousers mended.

The gutter-snipe, in a perfect state, is acquainted with all the police of Paris, and when he meet one, can always put a name to his face. He tells them off on his fingers, studies their habits, and has his special notes about each. He reads the minds of the police like an open book, and will say fluently and without hesitating, “So-and-so is a *traitor*, So-and-so is *very mean*, So-and-so is *great*, So-and-so is *ridiculous*.”

(The italicized words have all a peculiar meaning in his mouth.) That one thinks that the Pont Neuf belongs to him, and prevents "*people*" from walking on the cornice, outside the parapet; that other has a mania for pulling the ears of "*persons*," etc.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANTIQUE SPIRIT OF GAUL

THIS lad may be traced in Poquelin, a son of the Markets, and again in Beaumarchais, for gutter-snipes have a tinge of the Gallic temper. When blended with common sense, it sometimes adds strength, as alcohol does to wine; at other times it is a defect. Homer, it is true repeats himself; and we might say that Voltaire plays the gutter-snipe. Camille Desmoulins was a son of the faubourgs. Championnet, who abused miracles, rose from the pavement of Paris; when quite a lad, he "inundated the porticos" of St. Jean de Beauvais and St. Etienne du Mont, and was on such familiar terms with the shrine of St. Geneviève as eventually to give his orders to the vial of St. Januarius.

The Parisian gutter-snipe is respectful, ironical, and insolent. He has bad teeth because he is ill fed and his stomach suffers, and fine eyes because he has wit. He would hop up the steps of paradise on one foot in the very presence of Jehovah. He is clever at boxing, and all creeds are possible to him. He plays in the gutter, and draws himself up at the sound of a riot. His effrontery cannot be subdued by grape-shot. He was a vagabond, and he is a hero; and, like the little Theban, he shakes the lion's skin. Barra the drummer was a Parisian gutter-snipe. He shouts "Forward!" as the horse in Scripture says "Ha! ha!" and in an instant he changes from a brat to a giant.

This child of the mud is also the child of the ideal; to

see this we need only measure the distance between Molière and Barra.

In a word, the gutter-snipe is a being who amuses himself because he is unhappy.

CHAPTER X

ECCE PARIS, ECCE HOMO

TO sum it all up once more: the Paris gutter-snipe of the present day, like the *Graculus* of Rome in former times, is the youthful populace with the wrinkle of the Old World on its brow.

The gutter-snipe is a grace to the nation, and at the same time a malady,—a malady which must be cured. In what way? By light.

Light is sanitary and illumining.

All generous social irradiations issue from science, letters, the arts and instruction. Make men, make men! Enlighten them in order that they may warm you. Sooner or later the splendid question of universal instruction will present itself with the irresistible authority of absolute truth; and then those who govern under the sway of French ideas will have to make a choice between children of France and gutter-snipes of Paris,—between flames in the light or will-o'-the-wisps in the darkness.

The gutter-snipe expresses Paris, and Paris expresses the world; for Paris is a total. It is the firmament of the human race; and the whole of this prodigious city is an epitome of dead customs and living customs. The man who sees Paris imagines that he sees universal history, with sky and constellations in the intervals. Paris has a Capitol in the Town Hall, a Parthenon in Notre-Dame, a Mons Aventinus in the Faubourg St. Antoine, an Asinarium in the Sorbonne, a Pan-

theon in the Pantheon, a Via Sacra in the Boulevard des Italiens, a Temple of the Winds in public opinion, and it substitutes ridicule for the Gemoniæ. Its *majo* is now called a "rich cove," its *Transteverino* is a "son of the Faubougs," its *hammal* a "market porter," its *lazzarone* is one of the "swell mob," and its *cockney* a "masher." All that exists elsewhere exists in Paris. Dumarsais's fish-fag might retort to the herbseller of Euripides; Vejanus, the discobolus, lives again in the rope-dancer Forioso; Therapontiginus Miles might walk arm-in-arm with Grenadier Vademoncœur; Damassippus the broker would be happy among the dealers in *bric-à-brac*; Vincennes would hold Socrates under lock and key, just as Agora would pounce on Diderot; Grimod de la Regnière discovered larded beef as Curtillus invented roast hedgehog. We see the trapeze of which we read in Plautus reappear under the balloon of the Arc de l'Etoile; the sword swallower of Pæcilus encountered by Apuleius, is a swallower of swords on the Pont Neuf; Rameau' nephew and Curculion the parasite form a pair; Ergasiles would have himself introduced to Cambacérès by d'Aigrefeuille; the four fops of Rome, Alcesimarchus, Phædromus, Dicabolus, and Argirypus, descend the Courtille in Labatut's post-chaise; Aulus Gellius stopped before Congrio no longer than Charles Nodier did before Punchinello; Marto is not a tigress, but Pardalisca was not a dragon. Pantolabus the jester humbugs Nomentamus the *gourmet* at the Café Anglais, Hermogenes is a tenor in the Champs Elysées, and Thrasius the beggar, dressed as Bobèche, carries round the hat for him; the troublesome fellow who catches hold of your coat-button in the Tuileries makes you repeat after a lapse of two thousand years the apostrophe of Thesprion,—*Quis properantem me prehendit pallio?* The wine of Suresne is a parody on the wine of Alba; the red brim of Desaugers balances the vast cup of Balatron; Père Lachaise exhales beneath night showers the same gleams as the Esquilæ; and the poor man's grave, bought for five years, is quite equal to the hired coffin of the slave.

Seek for anything which Paris has not. The tub of

Trophonius contains nothing which is not in Mesmer's trough; Ergaphilas lives again in Cagliostro; the Brahmin Vāsaphantā is incarnated in the Count de St. Germain; and the Cemetery of St. Medard performs quite as good miracles as the Oumoumié Mosque at Damascus.

Paris has an Esop in Mayeux, and a Canidia in Made-moiselle Lenormand; it is startled as Delphi was by the flaming realities of the vision; it makes tables turn as Dodona did tripods; it places a grisette upon the throne as Rome placed a courtesan; and, after all, if Louis XV. is worse than Claudius, Madame du Barry is better than Messalina. Paris combines in an unprecedented type what is dead and what we have elbowed,—Greek nudity, the Hebrew ulcer, and Gascon puns. It mixes up Diogenes, Job, and Jackpudding, dresses a ghost in old numbers of the "Constitutionnel," and make Shadrach a Duclos.

Although Plutarch says that "the tyrant never grows old," Rome, under Scylla as under Domitian, was resigned, and willing to mix water with its wine. The Tiber was a Lethe, if we may believe the somewhat doctrinary eulogium which Varus Vibiscus made of it. "Contra Gracchos Tiberim habemus. Bibere Tiberim, id est seditionem oblivisci." Paris drinks a million quarts of water a day, but that does not prevent it from sounding the alarm and ringing the tocsin when the occasion offers.

With this exception, Paris is good-natured; it accepts everything royally; it is not hard to please in the matter of its Venus; its Callipyge is a Hottentot; provided that it laughs, it forgives; ugliness amuses it, deformity sets it in a roar, and vice diverts it; if you are droll, you may be a scoundrel; even hypocrisy, that supreme cynicism, does not revolt it; it is so literary that it does not hold its nose before Basile, and is no more scandalized by Tartuffe's prayer than Horace was terrified by the "hiccough" of Priapus. No feature of the universal face is wanting in the profile of Paris; the Bal Mabille is not the Polymnian dance of the Janiculum, but the hirer out of dresses devours the lorette with her eyes

exactly as the procuress Staphyla watched the virgin Plane-sium. The Barrière du Combat is not a Coliseum, but people are as ferocious there as if Cæsar were looking on. The Syrian hostess has more grace than Mother Saguet; but if Virgil frequented the Roman wine-shop, David of Angers, Balzac, and Charlet have seated themselves in Parisian pot-houses. Paris reigns, geniuses flash forth in it, and red-tails prosper. Adonaïs passes through it in his twelve-wheeled car of thunder and lightning; and Silenus makes his entrance on his ass. For Silenus read Ramponneau.

Paris is the synonym of Cosmos; Paris is Athens, Rome, Sybaris, Jerusalem, and Pantin. All civilizations are found there in abridged form, but so are all barbarisms. Paris would be very sorry not to have a guillotine.

A little of the Place de Grève is useful; for what would this eternal festival be without that seasoning? The laws have wisely provided for that; and, thanks to them, the knife drips blood upon this Shrove Tuesday.

CHAPTER XI

THE REIGN OF RIDICULE

THERE is no limit to Paris. No other city has held that sway which at times derides those whom it holds in subjection. "To please you, O Athenians!" Alexander exclaimed. Paris makes more than the law, for it makes the fashion; and it produces more than fashion, for it produces routine. Paris may be stupid, if it think proper. At times it indulges in that luxury, and then the universe is stupid with it; but Paris soon wakes up, rubs its eyes, says, "How stupid I am!" and laughs in the face of the human race. What a marvel such a city is! How strange it is to find this grandeur and this buffoonery side by side, to see that

all this majesty is not disturbed by this parody, and that the same mouth can to-day blow the trumpet of the Judgment Day, and to-morrow a penny whistle! Paris has a sovereign gayety; but the gayety is lightning, and its farce holds a sceptre. Its hurricane sometimes proceeds from a grimace; its explosions, its days, its masterpieces, its prodigies, its epics, go forth to the ends of the world, and so do its cock-and-bull tales. Its laugh is the crater of a volcano which bespatters the world; and its jokes are sparks of fire. It imposes upon nations its caricatures as well as its ideal; and the loftiest monuments of human civilization accept its ironies and lend their eternity to its tricks. It is superb; it has a prodigious July 14, which delivers the globe; it compels all nations to take the oath in the tennis-court; its night of August 4 dissolves in three hours a thousand years of feudalism; it makes of its logic the muscle of unanimous will; it multiplies itself in every form of the sublime; it fills with its lustre Washington, Kosciusko, Bolivar, Bozzaris, Riego, Bem, Manin, Lopez, John Brown, and Garibaldi; it is found wherever the future bursts into flame,— at Boston in 1779, at the Isle of Leon in 1820, at Pesth in 1848, at Palermo in 1860; it whispers the powerful watchword “Liberty” in the ear of the American abolitionists assembled at Harper’s Ferry, and in that of the patriots of Ancona assembled in the darkness before the Gozzi inn, on the sea-shore; it creates Canaris, it creates Quiroga, it creates Pisacane; it radiates grandeur upon the earth; it was by going whither its blast impelled him that Byron died at Missolonghi, and Mazet at Barcelona; it is the tribune under the feet of Mirabeau, and a crater under those of Robespierre; its books, its plays, its art, science, literature, and philosophy are the manuals of the human race; it has Pascal, Regnier, Corneille, Descartes, and Rousseau; Voltaire for all moments, Molière for all ages; it makes the universal mouth speak its language, and that language becomes the Word; it constructs in every mind the idea of progress; the liberating dogmas which it forges are the “pistol under the pillow” of generations; and it is with the

soul of its thinkers and its poets that all heroes of all nations have been formed since 1789. Still, this does not prevent it from playing the gutter-snipe; and the enormous genius which is called Paris, while transfiguring the world with its light, draws Bouginier's nose with charcoal on the wall of the Temple of Thesus and writes "Credeville the Thief" upon the Pyramids.

Paris constantly shows its teeth; when it is not scolding it is laughing,—such is Paris.

The smoke from its chimneys constitutes the ideas of the universe; it is a pile of mud and stones if you like, but it is, above all, a moral being. It is more than grand, it is immense; and why? Because it dares.

Daring is the price paid of progress.

All sublime contests are more or less the rewards of boldness. In order that the Revolution should take place, it is not enough that Montesquieu should foresee it, Diderot preach it, Beaumarchais announce it, Condorcet calculate it, Arouet prepare it, and Rousseau premeditate it; Danton must dare it.

The cry *Audacity!* is a *fiat lux*. In order that the human race may progress, it must have proud lessons of courage permanently before it. Rashness dazzles history, and is one of man's great sources of light. The dawn dares when it breaks. To attempt, to brave, persist, and persevere, to be faithful to one's self, to wrestle with destiny, to astound the catastrophe by the slight fear which it causes us, now to confront unjust power, again to insult intoxicated victory, to hold firm and withstand,—such is the example which nations need and the light which electrifies them. The same formidable flash proceeds from the torch of Prometheus and the short clay pipe of Cambronne.

CHAPTER XII

THE FUTURE LATENT IN THE PEOPLE

AS for the Parisian people, even when full grown, it is always the gutter-snipe; to depict the lad is to depict the city, and that is the reason why we have studied the eagle in the saucy sparrow.

The Parisian race, we say again, is found most truly in the Faubourgs. There it is pure-blooded, there we find the real physiognomy, there the people work and suffer; and toil and suffering are the two faces of man. There are there immense numbers of strange beings, among whom may be found the wildest types, from the porter of La Râpee to the knacker of Montfauçon. *Fæx urbis*, Cicero exclaims; *mob*, Burke adds indignantly; a rabble, a multitude, a populace. These words are quickly uttered; but no matter! What do I care that they go about barefoot? They cannot read; so much the worse. Will you abandon them on that account? Will you convert their distress into a curse? Cannot light penetrate these masses? Let us revert to that cry: Light! and let us insist upon it. Light, light; who knows whether this darkness may not become transparent? For are not revolutions themselves transfigurations? Come, philosophers, teach, enlighten, illumine, think aloud, speak aloud, run joyfully into the sunshine, fraternize with public places, announce the glad tidings, spread alphabets abroad, proclaim the rights of man, sing the "Marseillaise," sow enthusiasms, and pluck green branches from the oaks. Make a whirlwind of the idea. This crowd may be made sublime. Let us learn how to make use of that vast conflagration of principles and virtues, which crackles and bursts into flame at certain hours. These bare feet, these naked arms, these rags, this ignorance, this abjectness, this darkness, may be employed for the conquest of the ideal. Look beyond the people, and you will

perceive the truth. The vile sand which you trample underfoot, when cast into the furnace and melted, will become splendid crystal; and by its aid, Galileo and Newton will discover stars.

CHAPTER XIII

LITTLE GAVROCHE

EIGHT or nine years after the events recorded in the second part of this story, there might have been seen on the Boulevard du Temple and in the region of the Château d'Eau, a little boy about eleven or twelve years of age, who would have tolerably well realized the ideal of a gutter-snipe as sketched above, had he not had, with the smile of his age on his lips, a heart absolutely gloomy and void. This child was rigged out in a man's trousers, but he did not get them from his father, and a woman's jacket, which did not come from his mother. Some person had clothed him in rags out of charity. Yet he had a father and a mother; but his father did not think of him, and his mother did not love him.

He was one of those children most worthy of pity, who have father and mother, and yet are orphans.

This child was never so comfortable anywhere as in the street, for the paving-stones were less hard to him than his mother's heart.

His parents had kicked him out into life, and he had simply tried his wings.

He was a noisy, pale, active, sharp, impudent lad, with a cunning and sickly look. He came and went, sang, played at hop-scotch, scraped the gutters, pilfered a little, but gayly, like cats and sparrows, laughed when he was called a scamp, and got angry when called a thief.

He had no bed, no bread, no fire, no love; but he was happy because he was free.

When these poor creatures are men, the mill-stones of the social order nearly always crush them; but so long as they are children they escape because they are small. The slightest hole saves them.

Still, abandoned as this child was, it happened every two or three months that he said, "Well, I'll go and see mamma." Then he quitted the Boulevard, the Circus, the Porte St. Martin, went along the quays, crossed bridges, reached the Faubourgs, reached the Salpêtrière, and stopped,—where? Exactly at that double No. 50-52, which the reader knows,—the Gorbeau House.

At this period, No. 50-52, which was usually deserted and eternally decorated with a bill of "Lodgings to Let," was, strange to say, inhabited by several persons who had no acquaintance with each other, as is always the case in Paris. All belonged to that indigent class which begins with the last small tradesman in difficulties, and is prolonged from wretchedness to wretchedness to those two beings in whom all the material things of civilization end,—the scavenger and the ragpicker.

The "chief lodger" of Jean Valjean's day was dead, and her place had been taken by another exactly like her. I forget now what philosopher said, "There is never any want of old women."

This new old woman was called Madame Bourgon, and had nothing remarkable about her life save a dynasty of three paroquets which had successively reigned over her soul.

The most wretched of all the persons inhabiting the house were a family of four persons, father, mother, and two half-grown daughters, all four living in the same attic,—one of the cells to which we have alluded.

At first sight this family was not very peculiar, save for its extreme destitution; and the father, on hiring the room, stated that his name was Jondrette. A short time after he moved in,—which had borne a striking resemblance (to em-

ply the memorable remark of the "chief lodger") to "the coming in of nothing at all,"—this Jondrette had said to the woman, who, like her predecessor, was also portress, and swept the stairs, "Mother So-and-so, if any one should chance to ask for a Pole or an Italian, or perhaps a Spaniard, I am the party."

This was the family of the merry little vagabond. He joined it, and found distress, and, what is sadder still, not a smile; a cold hearth and cold hearts. When he entered, they asked, "Where do you come from?" and he answered, "From the street;" when he went away, "Where are you going?" and he answered, "To the street." His mother would say, "What do you want here?"

The boy lived in this absence of affection like the pale plants which grow in cellars. He was not hurt by it, and he blamed no one; he did not know exactly how a father and mother ought to be.

However, his mother loved his sisters.

We have forgotten to mention that on the Boulevard du Temple the lad was called Little Gavroche. Why was he called Gavroche? Probably because his father's name was Jondrette.

It seems to be the instinct of some wretched families to break the thread which binds them.

The room which the Jondrettes occupied in the Gorbeau House was the last at the end of the passage. The cell next to it was occupied by a very poor young man called Monsieur Marius.

Let us explain who this Monsieur Marius was.

BOOK II

THE TRADESMAN TRIUMPHANT

CHAPTER I

NINETY YEARS OLD AND TWO-AND-THIRTY TEETH

THERE are still a few persons residing in the Rue Boucherat, Rue de Normandie, and Rue de Saintonge, who can remember a gentleman of the name of Gillenormand, and who speak kindly of him; he was old when they were young. This dim figure has not entirely disappeared — for those who look sadly at the vague congregation of shadows called the past — from the labyrinth of streets near the Temple, which in the reign of Louis XIV. received the names of all the provinces of France, exactly in the same way as in our time the names of all the capitals of Europe have been given to the streets in the new Tivoli quarter; a progression, by the bye, in which progress is visible.

M. Gillenormand, who was as lively as possible in 1831, was one of those men who have become curiosities to be looked at, solely because they have lived a long time, and who are strange because they once resembled everybody and now no longer resemble any one. He was a peculiar old man, and most certainly the man of another age, the true, complete and rather haughty tradesman of the eighteenth century, who wore his honest old tradesmanship with the same air as marquises wear their marquisate. He had passed his ninetieth year, walked upright, talked loudly,

saw clearly, drank hard, ate, slept, and snored. He still had his two-and-thirty teeth, and only wore spectacles to read with. He was of an amorous temper, but said that for the last ten years he had decidedly and entirely given up women. "He could no longer please," he said; he did not add, "I am too old," but "I am too poor. If I were not ruined — he, he, he!" In fact, all that was left him was an income of about fifteen thousand francs. His dream was to drop into a large inheritance, and have one hundred thousand francs a year, in order to keep mistresses. As we see, he did not belong to that sickly variety of octogenarians who, like Voltaire, were dying all their life; his longevity was not that of the cracked jug, and this jolly old gentleman had constantly enjoyed good health. He was superficial, quick, easily angered, and he would storm at the slightest thing, most usually contrary to all reason. When he was contradicted, he raised his cane and thrashed people, as folks used to do in the great century. He had a daughter upward of fifty years of age and unmarried, whom he gave a good licking when he was in a passion, and whom he would have liked to horsewhip, for he still fancied her eight years of age. He boxed his servants' ears soundly, and would say, "Ah, carrion!" One of his oaths was, "By the *pantofloche* of the *pantouflochade*!" He had strange fits of tranquillity. He was shaved every morning by a barber who had been mad, and who detested him; for he was jealous of M. Gillenormand on account of his wife who was a pretty little coquette. M. Gillenormand admired his own discernment in everything, and declared himself extremely sagacious. Here is one of his remarks: "I have, in truth, some penetration. I am able to say, when a flea bites me, from what woman I caught it." The words he employed most frequently were "the sensitive man" and "nature," but he did not give to the latter word the vast acceptance of our age; he introduced it after his own fashion into his little chimney-corner satires. "Nature," he would say, "anxious that civilization should have a little of everything, even gives it specimens of amusing barbarism. Europe has

specimens of Asia and Africa on a small scale; the cat is a drawing-room tiger, the lizard a pocket crocodile. The ballet girls at the opera are pink savagesses; they do not eat men, but they devour them. The little magicians change them into oysters and swallow them. The Caribs leave only the bones, and they leave only the shell. Such are our manners; we do not devour, but we nibble; we do not exterminate, but we claw."

CHAPTER II

LIKE MASTER, LIKE HOUSE

HE lived in the Marais, at No. 6, Rue des Filles du Calvaire. The house belonged to him. This house has since been pulled down and rebuilt, and the number has probably been changed in those revolutions of numeration which the streets of Paris undergo. He occupied an old and vast suite of rooms on the first floor, furnished to the very ceilings with huge Gobelins and Beauvais tapestries representing pastoral scenes; the subjects of the ceilings and panels were repeated in miniature upon the chairs. He surrounded his bed with an immense nine-leaved screen of Coromandel lacquer-work; long, full curtains hung from the windows, and made very splendid, large, broken folds. The garden immediately under the windows was reached by a flight of twelve or fifteen steps running from one of them, which the old gentleman went up and down very nimbly. In addition to a library adjoining his bedroom, he had a boudoir of which he was very fond,—a stylish retreat, hung with magnificent straw-colored fleur-de-lis hangings with a pattern of flowers, made on the galleys of Louis XIV., and ordered by M. de Vivonne of his convicts for his mistress. M. Gillenormand inherited this from a stern maternal great-aunt, who died at the age of one hundred. He had had two wives. His manners were midway

between those of the courtier, which he had never been, and of the barrister, which he might have been. He was gay and caressing when he liked. In his youth he had been one of those men who are always deceived by their wives and never by their mistresses, because they are at once the most disagreeable husbands and the most charming lovers imaginable. He was a connoisseur of pictures, and had in his bedroom a marvelous portrait of some unknown personage, painted by Jordaens with bold syeeps of the brush, and with an infinitude of details, in a slap-dash, haphazard style. M. Gillenormand's coat was not in the style of Louis XV. or even Louis XVI., but it was in the style of the Incroyables of the Directory. He had believed himself quite a youth at that time, and followed the fashions. His coat was of light cloth, with large flaps, a long swallow-tail, and large steel buttons. Add to this, knee-breeches and buckle-shoes. He always had his hands in his fobs, and said authoritatively, "The French Revolution is a lot of ragamuffins."

CHAPTER III

LUKE ESPRIT

AT the age of sixteen, at the opera one night, he had the honor of being ogled simultaneously by two mature beauties at that time celebrated and sung by Voltaire,—Camargo and Salle. Caught between two fires, he beat a heroic retreat upon a little dancing-girl of the name of Nahenry, sixteen years of age, like himself, obscure as a cat, of whom he was enamoured. He abounded in recollections, and would exclaim, "How pretty that Guimard-Guimardini-Guimardinette was, the last time I saw her at Longchamps, with her hair dressed in 'sustained feelings,' her 'come and see them' of turquoises, her dress of the colour of 'newly arrived peo-

ple,' and her 'agitation' muff." He had worn in his youth a waistcoat of Nain-Londrin, to which he was fond of alluding: "I was dressed like a Turk of the Levantine Levant." Madame Boufflers, seeing him accidentally when he was twenty years of age, declared him to be "a charming madcap." He was scandalized at all the names he saw in politics and power, and considered them low and common. He read the journals, the "newspapers," the "gazettes," as he called them, and burst into a laugh. "Oh!" he would say, "who are these people? Corbière! Humann! Casimir Perrier! there's a ministry for you! I can imagine this in a paper: 'M. Gillenormand, minister;' it would be a joke, but they are so stupid that it might easily pass." He lightly called everything by its proper or improper name, and was not checked by the presence of ladies. He uttered coarseness, obscenity, and filth with a peculiar calmness and lack of surprise which was elegant. That was the fashion, the careless way of his age; for we may draw attention to the fact that the season of paraphrase in verse was that of crudities in prose. His grandfather had predicted that he would be a man of genius, and gave him the two significant Christian names Luke Esprit.

CHAPTER IV

ASPIRING TO BE A CENTENARIAN

M. GILLENORMAND won prizes in his youth at the college of Moulins, in which town he was born, and was crowned by the hand of the Duke de Nivernais, whom he called the Duke de Nevers. Neither the Convention, the death of Louis XVI., Napoleon, the return of the Bourbons, nor anything else could efface the recollection of this coronation. The Duke de Nevers was to him the great figure of the age. "What a charming nobleman," he would say, "and how well

his blue ribbon became him!" In the eyes of M. Gillenormand, Catherine II. repaired the crime of the division of Poland by purchasing of Bestucheff, for three thousand roubles, the secret of the elixir of gold; and on this point he would grow animated. "The elixir of gold!" he would exclaim. "Bestucheff's yellow tincture and the drops of General Lamotte were, in the eighteenth century, the grand remedy for love catastrophes, the panacea against Venus at one louis the half-ounce bottle. Louis XV. sent two hundred bottles of it to the Pope." He would have been greatly exasperated had he been told that the elixir of gold is nothing but perchloride of iron. M. Gillenormand adored the Bourbons, and held 1789 in horror; he was forever describing how he had escaped during the Reign of Terror, and how he was obliged to display great gayety and wit in order not to have his head cut off. If any young man dared in his presence to praise the Republic, he turned purple, and grew so angry as almost to faint. Sometimes he alluded to his ninety years, and said, "I trust that I shall not see '93 twice." At other times, though, he informed people that he intended to live to be a hundred.

CHAPTER V

BASQUE AND NICOLETTE

M. GILLENORMAND had his theories; here is one of them: "When a man is passionately fond of women, and himself has a wife for whom he cares little, who is ugly, ill-tempered, legitimate, full of her rights, reliant on the code, and jealous at need, there is only one way to get out of the hobble and live at peace,—it is to leave his purse-strings to his wife. This abdication sets him free; his wife is henceforth occupied, grows passionately fond of handling coin, verdigrises her fingers, undertakes to instruct peasants and

train farmers, harangues notaries, visits their offices, follows the course of lawsuits, draws up leases, dictates contracts, feels herself a queen, sells, buys, regulates, orders, promises and compromises, yields, binds and looses, arranges, disarranges, saves and squanders; she commits follies, which is a supreme and personal pleasure, and that consoles her. While her husband despises her, she has the satisfaction of ruining her husband." This theory M. Gillenormand applied to himself, and it became his history. His wife, the second one, managed his fortune in such a manner that one fine day when he found himself a widower, he had just enough left to live on by buying an annuity, three-fourths of which would expire with him. He had not hesitated, for he did not care much about leaving anything to his heir, and besides, he had seen that patrimonies had their adventures, and, for instance, became "national property;" he had seen the avatars of the three per cent consols, and put but little faith in the Great Book of the Public Debt. "All that is Rue Quincampoix!"¹ he would say. His house in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire belonged, as we said, to him; and he had two servants, "a he and a she." When a servant came into his house M. Gillenormand re-christened him, and gave the men the name of their province,—Nîmois, Comtois, Poitevin, or Picard. His last valet was a fat, pursy, short-winded fellow of fifty-five, incapable of running twenty yards; but, as he was born at Bayonne, M. Gillenormand called him Basque. As for the maid-servants, he called them all Nicolette,—even Magnon, to whom we shall allude directly. One day a proud cook, a *cordón blue*, of the lofty race of porters, presented herself. "What wages do you expect a month?" asked M. Gillenormand. "Thirty francs." "What is your name?" "Olympia." "I will give you fifty, and call you Nicolette."

¹ As we should say, "Queer Street."

CHAPTER VI

A GLIMPSE AT MAGNON AND HER LITTLE ONES

IN Gillenormand, sorrow was translated into passion; he was furious at being in despair. He had every prejudice and took every license. One of the things of which he composed his external relief and internal satisfaction was, as we have hinted, having remained a gay fellow and passing energetically for such. He called this having a "royal renown;" but this rough renown at times brought him singular windfalls. One day there was brought to him in a hamper, like a basket of oysters, a big baby, wrapped in rags and crying lustily, which a maid-servant, discharged six months previously, attributed to him. M. Gillenormand was at that time past his eighty-fourth year, and people around him became indignant and clamorous. "Does the impudent wench expect to make anybody believe that? What audacity! What an abominable calumny!" M. Gillenormand, however, did not feel at all angry. He looked at the brat with the amiable smile of a man flattered by the calumny, and said to the company: "Well, what is the matter now? Is that anything so wonderful that you should stand there like stuck pigs and display your ignorance? The Duke d'Angoulême, bastard of his Majesty Charles IX., married at the age of eighty-five a silly jade of fifteen; Monsieur Virginal, Marquis d'Alleuze, and brother of Cardinal de Sourdis, archbishop of Bordeaux, had, at the age of eighty-three, by the lady's maid of Madame Jacquin, the president's wife, a genuine love-child, who was a Knight of Malta and member of the Privy Council. One of the great men of this age, Abbé Tabaraud, is the son of a man of eighty-seven. These things are common enough; and then take the Bible! After this, I declare that this little gentleman is none of mine, but take care of him, for it is not his fault." The creature,—the afore-

said Magnon,— sent him a second parcel the next year, also a boy, and M. Gillenormand thought it time to capitulate. He sent the two brats back to their mother, agreeing to pay eighty francs a month for their support, but on condition that the said mother was not to do so any more. He added, “ I expect that the mother will treat them well; and I shall go to see them now and then,” which he did.

He had a brother, a priest, who was for three-and-thirty years rector of the Poitiers academy, and died at the age of seventy-nine. “ I lost him young,” he would say. This brother, who is mostly forgotten, was a great miser, who, as he was a priest, thought himself bound to give alms to the poor whom he met; but he never gave them aught but bad or called-in money, thus finding means of going to hell by way of paradise. As for M. Gillenormand the elder, he never haggled over his alms, but gave cheerfully and generously; he was benevolent, brusque, and charitable, and had he been rich, his declining years would have been magnificent. He liked everything that concerned him to be done grandly, even his rogueries. When he was swindled one day in the matter of an inheritance by a man of business, in a clumsy and evident way, he made the solemn remark: “ Sir, that was very awkwardly done, and I am ashamed of such clumsiness. Everything has degenerated in this age, even the swindlers. Good gracious! a man of my stamp ought not to be robbed in that way. I am plundered as if I were in a wood, but clumsily plundered: *sylvæ sint consule dignæ!* ” He had married twice, as we said; by his first wife he had a girl, who did not marry, and by the second another girl, who died at the age of thirty, and who had married, through love or chance, or otherwise, a soldier of fortune, who had served in the armies of the republic and the empire, won the cross at Austerlitz and his colonel’s commission at Waterloo. “ He is the disgrace of my family,” the old gentleman used to say. He took a great deal of snuff, and had a peculiarly graceful way of shaking his shirt-frill with the back of his hand. He believed very little in God.

CHAPTER VII

ORDERS: NO ONE RECEIVED EXCEPT IN THE EVENING

SUCH was Luke Esprit Gillenormand, who had not lost his hair, which was rather gray than white, and which he always wore in "dog's-ears." Altogether he was venerable. He was a man of the eighteenth century, frivolous and grand.

In 1814, and during the early years of the Restoration, M. Gillenormand, who was still young,—he was only seventy-four,—resided in the Rue Sirvandoni, near St. Sulpice, Faubourg St. Germain. He only retired to the Marias on leaving society,—that is to say, long after his eightieth year.

On leaving the world he immured himself in his habits; the chief one, and that which never varied, was to keep his door absolutely closed by day and receive nobody, no matter the nature of his business, till night. He dined at five, and then his door was thrown open; it was the fashion of his century, and he would not give it up. "The day is vulgar," he would say, "and deserves only closed shutters." People of fashion light up their wit when the zenith illumines its stars; and he barricaded himself against everybody, even had it been the king,—such was the antique elegance of his day.

CHAPTER VIII

TWO DO NOT MAKE A PAIR

AS for M. Gillenormand's two daughters, they were born at an interval of ten years. In their youth they had resembled each other very slightly, either in character or countenance, and were as unlike sisters as possible. The

younger was a charming creature, who turned to the light, loved flowers, poetry, and music, was enthusiastic, ethereal, and betrothed from her youth up in fancy to some heroic figure. The elder had her chimera too. She saw in the azure an army-contractor, some fat and very rich man, a splendidly stupid husband, a million converted into a man, or else a prefect; the receptions at the prefecture, the usher in the anteroom with a chain round his neck, the official balls, the addresses at the Town Hall, to be "the prefect's wife,"—all this buzzed in her imagination. The two sisters wandered thus, each in her own dream, when they were girls, and both had wings,—the one those of an angel, the other those of a goose.

No ambition is fully realized,—at least not in this nether world; and no paradise becomes earthly in our age. The younger married the man of her dreams, but she died; while the elder did not marry at all.

At the period when she enters into our narrative, she was an antique piece of virtue, an incombustible prude, with one of the sharpest noses and most obtuse minds imaginable. It is a characteristic fact that outside of her immediate family no one had ever known her Christian name; she was always called the elder Mademoiselle Gillenormand.

In the matter of cant, Mademoiselle Gillenormand could have given points to a Miss; she was modesty carried to the verge of blackness. She had one frightful reminiscence in her life,—one day a man saw her garter.

Age had only heightened this pitiless modesty; her chemisette was never sufficiently opaque, and never high enough. She multiplied brooches and pins at places where no one dreamed of looking. The peculiarity of prudery is to station the more sentries the less the fortress is menaced.

Still, let who will explain these ancient mysteries of innocence, she allowed herself to be kissed without displeasure by an officer in the Lancers, who was her grand-nephew, and Théodule by name.

In spite of this favoured lancer, however, the ticket of

"Prude," which we have set upon her, suited her exactly. Mademoiselle Gillenormand was a sort of twilight soul, and prudery is a semi-virtue and a semi-vice

She added to prudery the congenial lining of bigotry; she belonged to the Sisterhood of the Virgin, wore a white veil on certain saints' days, mumbled special orisons, revered "the holy blood," venerated "the sacred heart," remained for hours in contemplation before a rococo Jesuit altar in a chapel which was closed to the lower order of the faithful, and allowed her soul soar among little marble clouds and through large beams of gilded wood.

She had a chapel friend, an old maid like herself, of the name of Vaubois, absolutely imbecile, and by whose side Mlle. Gillenormand had the pleasure of being an eagle. Beyond the Agnus Dei and Ave Maria, Mlle. Vaubois knew nothing except the different modes of making preserves. Perfect in her way, she was the ermine of stupidity without a single spot of intelligence.

We must add that Mlle. Gillenormand, as is the case with passive natures, rather gained than lost by growing old. She had never been ill-natured, which is relative goodness; and, then, years smooth angles. The softening influence of time had touched her. She had a vague melancholy, of which she herself did not possess the secret; and about her entire person there was the stupor of a life finished, although never begun.

She kept house for her father. M. Gillenormand had his daughter, as Monseigneur Beinvenu had his sister, to care for him. Such families, consisting of an old man and an old maid, are not rare, and have the ever-touching aspect of two weaknesses supporting each other.

There was also in this house, between the old man and the old maid, a child, a little boy, who was always trembling and dumb in the old gentleman's presence. M. Gillenormand never spoke to this boy except in a stern voice, and sometimes with uplifted cane. "Come here, sir! Scamp, scoundrel, come here. Answer me, fellow! Only let me look at you, vagabond!" etc. He adored him.

It was his grandson, and we shall meet him again.

BOOK III

GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON.

CHAPTER I

AN ANCIENT DRAWING-ROOM

WHEN M. Gillenormand lived in the Rue Sirvandoni, he frequented several very good and aristocratic houses. Although a tradesman, M. Gillenormand was welcome in them; and as he had double measure of wit,—namely, that which he had and that attributed to him,—he was sought after and made much of. He never went anywhere save on condition of being the chief person present. There are some people who desire influence and to be talked about, no matter what price they pay; and when they cannot be oracles they make themselves buffoons. M. Gillenormand was not of that nature; and his domination in the royalist drawing-rooms which he frequented cost his self-respect nothing. He was an oracle everywhere, and sometimes held his own against M. de Bonald, and even M. Bengy-Puy-Valée.

About 1817 he invariably spent two afternoons a week at the house of Baroness de T——, a worthy and respectable person, whose husband was ambassador to Berlin under Louis XVI. Baron de T——, who, when alive, was passionately devoted to magnetic ecstasies and visions, died abroad a ruined man, leaving as his sole fortune ten MS. volumes bound in red morocco and gilt-edged, which contained very curious

memoirs about Mesmer and his trouph. Madame de T—— did not publish these memoirs through dignity, and lived on a small annuity which had escaped the wreck, no one knew how. Madame de T—— lived away from Court ("which was a very mixed society," as she said), in noble, proud, and poor isolation. A few friends gathered twice a week round her widowed hearth, and this constituted a purely royalist salon. Tea was handed, and people uttered, according as the wind veered toward elegy or dithyrambs, groans or cries of horror, at the age, the Charter, the Bonapartists, the prostitution of the Blue Ribbon to untitled persons, and the Jacobinism of Louis XVIII.; and they also whispered about the hopes based on Monsieur, afterward Charles X.

Vulgar songs, in which Napoleon was called Nicholas, were greeted here with transports of delight. Duchesses, the most charming and delicate of ladies, went into ecstasies over couplets like the following, which were addressed to the "Federals:"—

"Tuck into your trousers, friend,
The shirt-tails which you drag.
Let no one say that patriots
Would shelter the white flag."

They amused themselves with puns which they fancied tremendous, with innocent jokes which they supposed venomous, with quatrains and even distichs. Here is one on the Dessolles Ministry, the moderate cabinet of which Decases and Deserre were members:—

"To plant the tottering throne firmly on its base,
You must change the soil, the greenhouse, and the house."¹

or else they drew up a list of the House of Peers, "an abominably Jacobin chamber," and combined names on this list so as to form, for instance, phrases like the following: "Damas, Sabran, Gouvion de St. Cyr." All this merrily.

¹ Untranslatable pun, founded on the words *de sol* (Dessolles), *de serre* (Deserre), and *de case* (Decases).

In that society the Revolution was parodied, and they had some desire to kindle the same passions in the contrary sense, and sang their *ça ira*.

“Ah! *ça ira! ça ira! ça ira!*
Les Buonapartist à la lanterne!”

Songs are like the guillotine,—they cut off indiscriminately, to-day this head, and to-morrow that. It is only a variation.

In the Fualdès affair, which belongs to this period, 1816, they sided with Bastide and Jausion, because Fualdès was a “Bonapartist.” They called the liberals “friends and brothers,” and that was the last degree of insult.

Like some church-steeples, the salon of the Baroness de T—— had two cocks; one was M. Gillenormand, the other Count de Lamothé Valois, of whom they whispered with a sort of respect, “You know,—the Lamothé of the necklace business.” These singular amnesties occur between different parties.

Let us add this: among tradesmen honoured situations are impaired by too facile relations; care must be taken as to who is admitted. Just as there is a loss of caloric in the vicinity of cold persons, there is a diminution of respect in the approach of despised persons. The old high society held itself above this law, as above every other; Marigny, brother of the Pompadour, visited the Prince de Soubise, not although, but because he was her brother. Du Barry, godfather of the Vaubernier, was most welcome at the house of Marshal Richelieu. That world is Olympus, and Mercury and the Prince de Guemenée are at home in it. A robber is admitted there, provided he be a god.

The Count de Lamothé, who, in 1815, was seventy-five years of age, had nothing remarkable about him beyond his silent and sententious air, his cold and angular face, his perfectly polite manners, his coat buttoned up to his chin, and his constantly crossed legs, covered with trousers of the colour of burnt sienna. His face was the same colour as his trousers.

This M. de Lamothe was "esteemed" in this salon on account of his "celebrity," and, strange to say, but true, on account of his name of Valois.

As for M. Gillenormand, the respect felt for him was of perfectly good alloy. He was an authority; in spite of his levity, he had a certain imposing, dignified, honest, and haughty manner which did not at all detract from his gayety; and his great age added to this. A man is not a century old with impunity. The years eventually form a venerable fence around a head.

He made remarks, too, which had the true sparkle of the old school. Thus, when the king of Prussia, after restoring Louis XVIII., paid him a visit under the name of Count de Ruppin, he was received by the descendant of Louis XIV. somewhat as if he were Marquis de Brandebourg, and with the most delicate impertinence. M. Gillenormand approved. "All kings who are not king of France," he said, "are provincial kings." One day the following question was asked, and the following answer given in his presence: "What has been done about the editor of the 'Courrier Français'?" "He is to be changed." "There's a *c* too much," M. Gillenormand dryly observed.

At a Te Deum on the anniversary of the return of the Bourbons, he said on seeing Talleyrand pass: "There's his Excellency, the Evil One."

M. Gillenormand was generally accompanied by his daughter, a tall woman, who was over fifty and looked sixty, and by a pretty little boy of seven, red and white, fresh, with happy, confident eyes, who never appeared in that drawing-room without hearing voices buzz around him: "How pretty he is! What a pity! poor boy!" This lad was the one to whom we referred just now, and he was called "poor boy" because he had for father "a brigand of the Loire."

This brigand was that son-in-law of M. Gillenormand who has already been mentioned, and whom the old gentleman called the "disgrace of the family."

CHAPTER II

A RED SPECTRE OF THAT PERIOD

ANY one who had passed at that period through the little town of Vernon and walked on the handsome stone bridge, which, let us hope, will soon be succeeded by some hideous wire bridge, might have noticed, on looking over the parapet, a man about fifty, wearing a leathern cap, trousers and waistcoat of coarse gray cloth, to which something yellow, which had once been a red ribbon, was sewn, shod with wooden shoes, his face tanned by the sun and almost black, his hair almost white, a large scar on his forehead which ran down his cheek, bowed, and prematurely aged, who walked almost every day, spade and bill-hook in hand, in one of the walled enclosures near the bridge, which border, like a chain of terraces, the left bank of the Seine. They are delicious enclosures full of flowers, of which you might say, were they much larger, "they are gardens," and if they were a little smaller, "they are bouquets." All these enclosures join the river at one end and a house at the other. The man in the waistcoat and wooden shoes, to whom we have alluded, occupied in 1817 the smallest of these enclosures and the humblest of these houses. He lived there alone and solitary, silently and poorly, with a woman who was neither young nor old, neither pretty nor ugly, neither peasant nor townswoman, who waited on him. The plot of ground which he called his garden was celebrated in the town for the beauty of the flowers that he cultivated. These flowers were his occupation.

By dint of toil, perseverance, attention, and buckets of water, he had succeeded in creating after the Creator; and he had invented sundry tulips and dahlias which seemed to have been forgotten by Nature. He was ingenious, and forestalled Soulange Bodin in the formation of small patches of peat-soil for the growth of rare and precious shrubs from America and

China. From daybreak in summer, he was in his garden-walks, pricking out, clipping, hoeing, watering, or moving among his flowers, with an air of kindness, sadness and gentleness. Sometimes he would stand thoughtful and motionless for hours, listening to the song of a bird in a tree, the prattle of a child in a house, or else gazing at a drop of dew on a blade of grass, which the sun converted into a carbuncle. He lived very plainly, and drank more milk than wine; a child could make him give way, and his servant scolded him. He was so timid that he seemed stern, went out rarely, and saw no one but the poor, who tapped at his window, and his priest Abbé Mabœuf, a good old man. Still, if the inhabitants of the town or strangers, curious to see his roses or tulips, came and tapped at his little door, he opened it with a smile. He was the "brigand of the Loire."

Any one who at the same time read military memoirs and biographies, the "Moniteur," and the bulletins of the Grand Army, might have been struck by a name which pretty often turns up,—that of George Pontmercy. When quite a lad, this Pontmercy was a private in the Saintonge regiment, and when the Revolution broke out this regiment formed part of the army of the Rhine, for the regiments of the monarchy kept their provincial names even after the fall of the monarchy, and were not divided into brigades till 1794. Pontmercy fought at Spire, Worms, Neustadt, Turkheim, Alzey, and at Mayence, where he was one of the two hundred who formed Houchard's rear-guard. He, with eleven others, held out against the corps of the Prince of Hesse behind the old rampart of Andernach, and did not fall back on the main body until the enemy's guns had opened a breach from the parapet to the foot of the glacis. He was under Kleber at Marchiennes, and at the battle of Mont Palissel, where his arm was broken by a rifle-ball; then he went to the Italian frontier, and was one of the thirty grenadiers who defended the Col de Tenda with Joubert. Joubert was appointed adjutant-general, and Pontmercy sub-lieutenant; he was by Berthier's side in the midst of the grape-shot on that day at Lodi which

made Bonaparte say, "Berthier was gunner, trooper, and grenadier." He saw his old general, Joubert, fall at Novi at the moment when he was shouting, with uplifted sabre, "Forward!" Having embarked with his company on board a cutter which sailed from Genoa to some little port on the coast, he fell into a wasp's-nest of seven or eight English sail. The Genoese commandant wished to throw his guns into the sea, to hide the soldiers in the hold, and to slip by in the dark as a merchant vessel; but Pontmercy had the tricolour flag hoisted at the peak, and proudly passed under the guns of the British frigates. Twenty leagues farther on, his audacity increasing, he attacked and captured a large English transport conveying troops to Sicily, and so laden with men and horses that the vessel's deck was almost flush with the sea. In 1805 he belonged to Malher's division, which took Günzburg from the Archduke Ferdinand; and at Weltingen he received in his arms, amid a shower of bullets, Colonel Maupetit, who was mortally wounded at the head of the 9th Dragoons. He distinguished himself at Austerlitz in that admirable march in columns of companies performed under the enemy's fire; and when the Russian Imperial Horse Guards destroyed one of the battalions of the 4th line infantry, Pontmercy was among those who took their revenge and drove back those Guards. For this the Emperor gave him the cross. Pontmercy saw in turn Wurmser made prisoner at Mantua, Mélas at Alessandria, and Mack at Ulm, and he belonged to the eighth corps of the Grand Army, which Mortier commanded, and which took Hamburg. Then he joined the 55th regiment of the line, which was the old regiment of Flanders; at Eylau, he was in the cemetery where the heroic Captain Louis Hugo, uncle of the author of this book, withstood with his company of eighty-three men, for two hours, the whole effort of the hostile army. Pontmercy was one of the three who left that cemetery alive. He was at Friedland; then he saw Moscow, the Beresina, Lutzen, Bautzen, Dresden, Wachau, Leipsic, and the defiles of Gelenhausen; then Montmirail, Chateau-Thierry, Craon, the banks of the Marne, the banks of the Aisne, and

the formidable position of Laon. At Arnay le Duc, as captain, he put ten Cossacks to the sword, and saved not his general, but his corporal; he was cut to pieces on this occasion, and seven-and-twenty splinters were taken out of his left arm alone. Eight days before the capitulation of Paris, he exchanged with a comrade and entered the cavalry; for he had what was called by the old school a "double hand,"—that is to say, an equal aptitude in handling, as private, a sabre or musket, as officer, a squadron or a company. From this aptitude, improved by military education, certain special branches of the service sprang; for instance, the dragoons, who are at once cavalry and infantry. He accompanied Napoleon to Elba, and at Waterloo was a major of cuirassiers in Dubois's brigade. It was he who took the colours of the Luneburg battalion, and himself threw them at the Emperor's feet. He was covered with blood; for, on seizing the colours, he received a sword-cut across the face. The Emperor, who was pleased, cried out to him, "You are a colonel, a baron, and an officer of the Legion of Honour!" Pontmercy answered, "Sire, I thank you on behalf of my widow." An hour later, he fell into the ravine of Ohain. And now who was this George Pontmercy? He was this same "brigand of the Loire."

We have already seen some portion of his history. After Waterloo, Pontmercy, drawn, as we remember, out of the sunken road of Ohain, succeeded in rejoining the army, and dragged himself from ambulance to ambulance as far as the cantonments of the Loire.

The Restoration put him on half-pay, and then sent him to Vernon under honourable supervision. King Louis XVIII., regarding all that was done during the Hundred Days as if it had not happened, recognized neither his rank as officer of the Legion of Honour, nor his commission as colonel, nor his title as baron. He for his part neglected no opportunity to sign himself, "Colonel Baron de Pontmercy." He had only one old blue coat, and never went out without attaching to it the rosette of the Legion of Honour. The at-

torney for the crown advised him that he would be tried for "illegally" wearing this decoration, and when this hint was given him by an officious intermeddler, Pontmercy replied, with a bitter smile. "I do not know whether I no longer understand French, or whether you do not speak it, but the fact remains the same,—I do not understand you." Then he went out for eight days in succession with his rosette, and the authorities did not venture to interfere with him. Twice or thrice the Minister of War and the general commanding the department wrote to him with the following superscription: "Commander Pontmercy;" and he sent back the letters unopened. At the same moment, Napoleon at St. Helena was treating in the same fashion the missives of Sir Hudson Lowe, addressed to "General Bonaparte." If we may be forgiven the remark, Pontmercy ended by being the very spit of his Emperor, as the common people say.

So, too, there were at Rome, Carthaginian prisoners who refused to salute Flaminius, and who had a little of Hannibal's spirit.

One morning he met the attorney for the crown in one of the streets of Vernon, went up to him, and said, "Sir, am I allowed to wear my scar?"

He had nothing but his scanty half-pay as chief of squadron; and he had taken the smallest house in Vernon, where he lived alone, as we have just seen. Under the empire, and between two wars, he found time to marry Mlle. Gillenormand. The old tradesmen, who was indignant at heart, consented with a sigh, saying, "The greatest families are forced into it." In 1815, Madame Pontmercy, a most admirable woman in every respect, and worthy of her husband, died, leaving a child. This child would have been the colonel's delight in his solitude, but the grandfather imperiously claimed him, declaring that if he were not given up to him, he would disinherit him. The father yielded for the sake of the little one; and, deprived of his child, he took to loving flowers.

He had, moreover, given up everything, neither agitating nor conspiring. He shared his thoughts between the innocent

things which he was doing and the great things which he had done; and he spent his time in hoping for a carnation, or in calling to mind Austerlitz.

M. Gillenormand kept up no relations with his son-in-law; the colonel was to him a "bandit," and he was to the colonel an "ass." M. Gillenormand never mentioned the colonel, except to make mocking allusions to "his barony." It was expressly stipulated that Pontmercy should never attempt to see his son or to speak to him, under penalty of having him thrown on his hands disinherited. To the Gillenormands, Pontmercy was a man afflicted with the plague, and they intended to bring up the child after their own fashion. The colonel perhaps did wrong to accept these terms; but he endured them in the belief that he was acting rightly, and sacrificing himself alone.

The inheritance of the grandfather was a small matter, but that of Mlle. Gillenormand the elder was considerable; for this aunt was very rich on her mother's side, and her sister's son was her natural heir. The boy, whose name was Marius, knew that he had a father, but nothing more; and no one opened his lips to him on the subject. Still, in the society into which his grandfather took him, the whispers and winks and innuendoes eventually enlightened the boy's mind. He understood something at last; and, as he naturally accepted, by a sort of infiltration and slow penetration, the ideas and opinions which were, so to speak, the air that he breathed, he gradually came to think of his father only with shame and an aching heart.

While he was growing up in this way, the colonel every two or three months came furtively to Paris, like a convict who is breaking his ban, and posted himself at St. Sulpice at the hour when Aunt Gillenormand took Marius to Mass. Trembling lest the aunt should turn round, concealed behind a pillar, motionless, and scarce daring to breathe, he gazed at his boy. The scarred warrior was afraid of the old maid.

From this very circumstance rose his friendship with Abbé Mabœuf, priest of Vernon.

This worthy priest had a brother, churchwarden of St. Sulpice, who had several times noticed this man contemplating his child, and the scar on his cheek, and the big tears in his eye. This man, who looked so thoroughly manly, yet who wept like a child, impressed the churchwarden; and the face lingered in his memory. One day when he went to Vernon to see his brother, he met Colonel Pontmercy on the bridge, and recognized the man of St. Sulpice. The churchwarden told the story to the priest, and both made some excuse to pay a visit to the colonel. This visit led to others, and the colonel, though at first very reserved, eventually opened his heart, and the priest and the churchwarden learned the whole history, and how Pontmercy had sacrificed his own happiness to the future of his child. The result was that the priest felt a veneration and tenderness for him; and the colonel, on his side, took the priest into his affection. By the way, when both are equally sincere and good, no men amalgamate more easily than an old priest and an old soldier, for they are the same men at bottom. One devotes himself to his country here below, the other to his country above; that is the only difference.

Twice a year, on January 1 and on St. George's Day, Marius wrote his father a duty letter dictated by his aunt, which looked as if copied from a hand-book, for that was all M. Gillenormand tolerated; and the father sent very affectionate replies, which the grandfather thrust into his pocket without reading.

CHAPTER III

REQUIESCANT

THE parlours of Madame de T—— were all that Marius Pontmercy knew of the world, and they were the sole opening by which he could look out into life. This opening was gloomy; and more cold than heat, more night than day,

reached him through this aperture. The boy, who was all joy and light when he entered this strange world, thus became, in a short time, sad, and, what is more contrary still to his age, serious. Surrounded by all these imposing and singular persons, he looked about him with grave surprise; and everything combined to increase his amazement. There were in Madame de T——'s drawing-room certain old, noble, and very venerable ladies, named Mathan, Noé, Levis (pronounced Levi), and Cambis (pronounced Cambyse). These ancient faces and those Biblical names were mingled in the boy's mind with his Old Testament, which he learned by heart; and when they were all present, seated in a circle round an expiring fire, in a room dimly lighted by a green-shaded lamp, with their severe profiles, their gray or white hair, their long dresses of another age, in which only mournful colours could be seen, uttering at lengthened intervals words at once majestic and stern, little Marius regarded them with wondering eyes, and fancied that he saw not women, but patriarchs and Magi,—not real beings, but ghosts.

With these ghosts were mingled several priests, frequenters of this old salon, and a few gentlemen, Marquis de Sass——, secretary to Madame de Berry; Viscount de Val——, who published odes under the pseudonym of Charles Antoine, Prince de Beauff——, who, though still young, had a gray head and a clever, pretty wife, whose dress of scarlet velvet, fringed with gold, and cut very low in the neck, startled this gloom; Marquis de C—— d'E——, the Frenchman who best understood "the various shades of politeness;" Count d'Am——, a gentleman with a benevolent chin; and Chevalier de Port de Guy, a pillar of the library of the Louvre, called the King's Cabinet. De Port de Guy, bald and rather aged than old, used to tell how, in 1793, when he was sixteen years of age, he was placed in the hulks as refractory, and chained to an octogenarian, the bishop of Mirepoix, also a refractory, but as priest, while he was so as soldier. It was at Toulon, and their duty was to go at night and collect on the scaffold the heads and bodies of persons guillotined during the day. They

carried these dripping trunks on their backs, and their red convict blouses had at the nape of the neck a crust of blood which was dry in the morning and moist at night. These tragical narratives abounded in the salon of Madame de T——, and from cursing Marat they came to applaud Trestaillon. A few deputies of the “undiscoverable” sort played their rubber of whist there; for instance, Thibord du Chalard, Lemarchant de Gomicourt, and the celebrated scoffer of the right division, Cornet Dincourt. The bailiff of Ferrette, with his knee-breeches and his thin legs, occasionally walked through the room on his way to Talleyrand’s house; he had been a companion of Count d’Artois, and, unlike Aristotle crouching beneath Campaspe, he had made the Guimard crawl on all fours, and thus displayed to future ages a philosopher avenged by a bailiff.

As for the priests, there was Abbé Halma, the same to whom Larose, his fellow-contributor to “La Foudre,” said, “Pooh! Who is not fifty years of age? A few hobble-de-hoys, perhaps.” Then came Abbé Letourneur, preacher to the king; Abbé Frayssinous, who at that time was neither bishop, count, minister, nor peer, and who wore a cassock from which buttons were absent; and Abbé Keravenant, priest of St. Germain des Près. To these we must add the Papal Nuncio, Monsignore Macchi, archbishop of Nisibi, afterward cardinal, and remarkable for his long pensive nose; and another monsignore, whose titles ran as follows: Abbate Palmieri, domestic prelate, one of the seven acting prothonotaries of the Holy See, canon of the glorious Liberian Basilica, and advocate of the saints, *postulatore di Santi*,—an office relating to matters of canonization, and meaning, very nearly, referendary to the department of paradise. Finally, there were two cardinals, De la Luzerne and De Cl—— T——. Cardinal de Luzerne was an author, and was destined to have the honour a few years later of signing articles in the “Conservateur” side by side with Châteaubriand, while De Cl—— T—— was archbishop of Toulouse, and frequently spent the summer in Paris with his nephew, Marquis de T——, who had been minister of the ma-

rine and of war. This cardinal was a merry little old gentleman, who displayed his red stockings under his well cut cassock. His specialty was a hatred of the encyclopædia and a mad love of billiards; and persons who on summer evenings passed along the Rue M——, where the Marquis de T—— resided, stopped to listen to the click of the balls and the sharp voice of the cardinal crying to his conclavist Monseigneur Cottret, bishop *in partibus* of Caryste, “Mark me a carom, abbé.”

Cardinal de Cl—— T—— was introduced to Madame de T—— by his most intimate friend, De Roquelaure, ex-bishop of Senlis and one of the Forty. De Roquelaure was remarkable for his great height and his assiduity at the Academy. Through the glass door of the room adjoining the library, in which the French Academy at that time met, curious persons could contemplate every Thursday the ex-bishop of Senlis usually standing with hair freshly powdered, in violet stockings, with his back to the door, apparently to display his little collar the better. All these ecclesiastics, although for the most part courtiers as much as churchmen, added to the gravity of the salon, to which five peers of France, the Marquis de Vib——, the Marquis de Tal——, the Marquis d’Herb——, the Viscount Damb——, and the Duke de Val——, imparted a lordly tone. This Duke de Val——, though Prince de Monaco,—that is to say, a sovereign prince abroad,—had so lofty an idea of France and the peerage that he viewed everything through their medium. It was he who said, “The cardinals are the peers of France of Rome, and the lords are the peers of France of England.” Still, as in the present age, the Revolution must be everywhere, this feudal salon was ruled, as we have seen, by M. Gillenormand, a tradesman.

It was the essence and quintessence of white Parisian society; and reputations, even royalist ones, were kept in quarantine there, for there is always anarchy in reputation. Had Châteaubriand entered, he would have produced the effect of Père Duchesne. Some converts, however, penetrated this or-

thodox society through a spirit of toleration. Thus Count de Beug—— was admitted, subject to correction.

The “noble” salons of the present day no longer resemble the one which I am describing, for the royalists of to-day, let us say it to their praise, are demagogues.

At Madame de T——’s the society was superior, and the taste exquisite and haughty under cover of a great show of politeness. Manners there displayed all sorts of involuntary refinements, which were the old school itself, still living though interred. Some of these habits, especially in the matter of language, seem whimsical; and persons superficially acquainted with them would have taken for provincialism what was merely antiquated. They called a lady “Madame la Générale;” and “Madame la Colonelle” had not entirely been laid aside. The charming Madame de Leon, doubtless remembering the Duchesses de Longueville and de Chevreuse, preferred that appellation to her title of princess, and the Marchioness de Créquy was also called “Madame la Colonelle.”

It was this small high society which invented at the Tuileries the refinement of always speaking to the king in the third person, as the “king,” and never as “your Majesty,” as that form of address had been “sullied by the usurper.”

Facts and men were judged there, and the age was ridiculed, — which saved them the trouble of comprehending it. They assisted one another in amazement, and communicated to each other that amount of enlightenment which they possessed. Methuselah instructed Epimenides, and the deaf man set the blind man right. The time which had elapsed since Coblenz was declared not to have existed, and in the same way that Louis XVIII. was, *Dei gratiâ*, in the twenty-fifth year of his reign, the emigrants were *de jure* in the twenty-fifth year of their adolescence.

Everything harmonized there; no one was too lively, speech was like a breath, and the newspapers, in accordance with the salon, seemed a papyrus. There were a few young people, but they were rather dead. The liveries in the anteroom were old; and these personages who had completely passed away

were served by foot-men of the same character. They all had an air of having lived a long time and of obstinately struggling against the tomb. To conserve, conservation, conservative, represented nearly their entire dictionary, and the question was "to be in good odour." There were really aromatics in the opinions of these venerable groups, and their ideas smelt of vervain. It was a mummied world, in which the masters were embalmed and the servants stuffed with straw.

A worthy old marchioness, ruined by the emigration, who had only one woman-servant left, continued to say, "My people."

What did they do in Madame de T——'s salon? They were ultra.

This remark, though what it represents has possibly not disappeared, has no meaning at the present day, so let us explain it.

To be ultra is to go beyond. It is to attack the sceptre in the name of the throne, and the mitre in the name of the altar; it is to mismanage the affair you have in hand; it is to kick over the traces; it is to quarrel with the stake as to the degree of cooking which heretics should undergo; it is to reproach the idol for its lack of idolatry; it is to insult through excess of respect; it is to find the Pope not enough of a Papist, the king too little of a royalist, and too much light in the night; it is to be dissatisfied with alabaster, snow, the swan, and the lily, on behalf of whiteness; it is to be a partisan of things to such a pitch that you become their enemy; it is to be so strongly for, that you become against.

The ultra spirit especially characterizes the first phase of the Restoration.

Nothing in history ever resembled that quarter of an hour which begins in 1814 and terminates in 1820, with the accession of De Villele, the practical man of the Right. These six years were an extraordinary moment; at once brilliant and silent, cheerful and gloomy, enlightened, as it were, by the radiance of dawn, and at the same time covered by the darkness of the great catastrophe which still filled the horizon and

was slowly sinking into the past. There was in this light and this shadow a complete world, old and new, comic and melancholy, juvenile and senile, rubbing its eyes; for nothing is so like a re-awaking as a return. There was a group that regarded France angrily, and which France regarded ironically; streets full of honest old owls of marquises, *ci-devants*, amazed at everything; brave and noble gentlemen smiling because they were in France, but weeping also, ravished to see their country again, and in despair at not finding their monarchy; the nobility of the Crusades spitting on the nobility of the empire,—that is to say, of the sword; historic races that had lost all sense of history; sons of the companions of Charlemagne disdaining the companions of Napoleon. The swords, as we have said, hurled insults at each other,—the sword of Fontenoy was ridiculous, and only a scrap of rusty iron; the sword of Marengo was odious, and only a sabre. The olden times misunderstood yesterday, and no one had a feeling for what was great or for what was ridiculous. Some called Bonaparte “Scapin.” This world no longer exists, and nothing connected with it, let us repeat, now remains. When we choose from it some one figure haphazard, and try to make it live again in thought, it seems to us as strange as the antediluvian world; and, in fact, it too was swallowed up by a deluge and disappeared under two revolutions. What waves ideas are! How quickly do they cover whatever it is their mission to destroy and to bury, and how promptly do they produce frightful gulfs!

Such was the aspect of the salon in those distant and candid days when Martainville had more wit than Voltaire.

These salons had a literature and politics of their own. They believed in Fiévée, and Agier laid down the law there. Colnet, the publisher and bookseller of the Quay Malaquais, was commented on; and Napoleon was thoroughly the Corsican ogre to them. At a later date the introduction into history of the Marquis de Buonaparté, lieutenant-general of the armies of the king, was a concession to the spirit of the age.

These salons did not long remain pure, and in 1818, a few

doctrinarians sprang up in them,—an alarming shade of distinction. In matters of which the ultras were very proud, the doctrinarians were somewhat ashamed; they had wit, they had silence, their political dogma was properly starched with arrogance, and they should have succeeded. They carried white neckcloths and tightly buttoned coats to an excess, though this was useful. The mistake or misfortune of the doctrinarian party was in creating old youth; they assumed the attitude of sages, and dreamed of grafting a temperate power upon the absolute and excessive principle. They opposed, and at times with rare sense, conservative liberalism, to the liberalism which demolishes, and they said, “Thanks for royalism, for it has rendered more than one service. It has brought back traditions, worship, religion, and respect. It is faithful, true, chivalric, loving, and devoted, and has blended though reluctantly, the secular grandeurs of the monarchy with the new grandeurs of the nation. It makes a mistake not to understand the Revolution, the empire, glory, liberty, young ideas, young generations, and the age; but do we not sometimes make the same mistake in regard to them? The Revolution, of which we are the heirs, ought to be intelligent on all points. To attack the royalists is the opposite of liberalism; what a mistake and what blindness! Revolutionary France lacks respect for historic France,—that is to say, for its mother, for itself. After September 5, the nobility of the monarchy were treated like the nobility of the empire after July 8; they were unjust to the eagle, and we are unjust to the *fleur-de-lis*. There always must be something to proscribe! Does it serve any purpose to ungild the crown of Louis XIV. and to scratch off the escutcheon of Henri IV.? We sneer at De Vaublanc, who effaced the N’s from the bridge of Jena, but he only did what we are doing. Bouvines belongs to us as much as Marengo, and the *fleurs-de-lis* are ours as well as the N’s. They are our patrimony; then why should we diminish it? The country must be no more denied in the past than in the present. Why not accept the whole of history? Why not love the whole of France?

It was thus that the doctrinarians criticised and protected the royalists, who were dissatisfied at being criticised, and furious at being protected.

The ultras marked the first epoch of royalism, and the congregation characterized the second; skill succeeded impetuosity. Let us close our sketch at this point.

In the course of his narrative, the author of this book found on his road this curious moment of contemporary history, and thought himself bound to take a passing glance at it and to retrace some of the singular features of this society which is unknown at the present day. But he has done so rapidly, and without any bitter or derisive idea, for affectionate and respectful reminiscences connected with his mother attach him to this past. Moreover, let him add, this little world had a grandeur of its own, and though we may smile at it we cannot despise or hate it. It was the France of other days.

Marius Pontmercy, like most children, received some sort of education. When he left the hands of Aunt Gillenormand, his grandfather confided him to a worthy professor of the purest classical innocence. This young mind, just expanding, passed from a prude to a pedant.

Marius spent some years at college, and then entered the law-school; he was a royalist, a fanatic, and austere. He loved his grandfather but little; the latter's gayety and cynicism ruffled him, and he was gloomy as regarded his father.

In other respects he was an ardent yet cold, noble, generous, proud, religious, and exalted youth; dignified almost to harshness, and pure almost to ferocity.

CHAPTER IV

THE END OF THE BRIGAND

THE close of Marius's classical studies coincided with M. Gillenormand's retirement from society; the old gentleman bade farewell to the Faubourg St. Germain and Madame de T——'s drawing-room, and withdrew to his house in the Marais. His servants were, in addition to the porter, Nicolette, that maid who succeeded Magnon, and the wheezing, short-winded Basque to whom we have already alluded.

In 1827, Marius attained his seventeenth year. On coming home one evening he saw his grandfather holding a letter in his hand.

"Marius," said M. Gillenormand, "you will start to-morrow for Vernon."

"Why?" asked Marius.

"To see your father."

Marius trembled, for he had thought of everything except this, that he might one day be obliged to see his father. Nothing could be more unexpected, more surprising, and, let us add, more disagreeable to him. It was estrangement forced into reconciliation, and it was not so much an annoyance as a bore.

Marius, in addition to his motives of political antipathy, was convinced that his father—"the slasher," as M. Gillenormand called him on his good-tempered days—did not love him; that was evident, as he had abandoned him thus, and left him to others. Not feeling himself beloved, he did not love; and he said to himself that nothing could be simpler.

He was so surprised that he did not question his grandfather, but M. Gillenormand continued:—

"It seems that he is ill, and asks for you." And after a pause he added: "Start to-morrow morning. I believe there

is a coach which leaves at six o'clock and gets to Vernon at nightfall. Go by it, for he says that the matter presses."

Then he crumpled up the letter and put it in his pocket. Marius could have started the same night and have been with his father the next morning; a diligence at that time used to run at night to Rouen, passing through Vernon. But neither M. Gillenormand nor Marius dreamed of inquiring.

On the evening of the following day Marius reached Vernon and asked the first passer-by for the house of "Monsieur Pontmercy." For in his own mind he was of the same opinion as the Restoration, and did not recognize his father's claim to the title of either baron or colonel.

The house was pointed out; he rang, and a woman holding a small hand-lamp opened the door.

"Monsieur Pontmercy?" asked Marius.

The woman stood motionless.

"Is this his house?" continued Marius.

The woman nodded her head.

"Can I speak to him?"

The woman shook her head.

"But I am his son," added Marius; "and he expects me."

"He no longer expects you," said the woman.

Then he saw that she was crying.

She pointed to the door of a parlour, and he went in.

In this room, which was lighted by a tallow candle placed on the mantelpiece, there were three men, one standing, one on his knees, and one lying at full length upon the floor, in his shirt. The one on the floor was the colonel; the other two were a physician, and a priest engaged in prayer.

The colonel had been attacked by brain fever three days before, and, having a foreboding of evil, he wrote to M. Gillenormand, asking for his son. The illness grew worse, and on the evening of Marius's arrival at Vernon, the colonel had an attack of delirium. He leaped out of bed, in spite of the maid-servant, crying, "My son does not come, I will go to meet him." Then he left his bedroom and fell on the floor of the ante-room; he had just expired.

The physician and the priest were summoned, but both arrived too late; the son had also arrived too late.

By the dim light of the candle, a big tear, which had fallen from the colonel's dead eye, could be seen on his pallid cheek. The eye was lustreless, but the tear was not dry. That tear was caused by his son's delay.

Marius gazed upon the man whom he saw for the first time and the last, upon that venerable and manly face, those open eyes which no longer saw, that white hair, and the robust limbs upon which could be distinguished here and there brown lines, which were sabre-cuts, and red stars, which were bullet holes. He gazed at the gigantic scar which stamped heroism on that face, upon which God had imprinted goodness. He thought that this man was his father, and that this man was dead, and he remained unmoved.

The sorrow which he felt was such as he would have felt in the presence of any other man whom he might have seen lying dead before him.

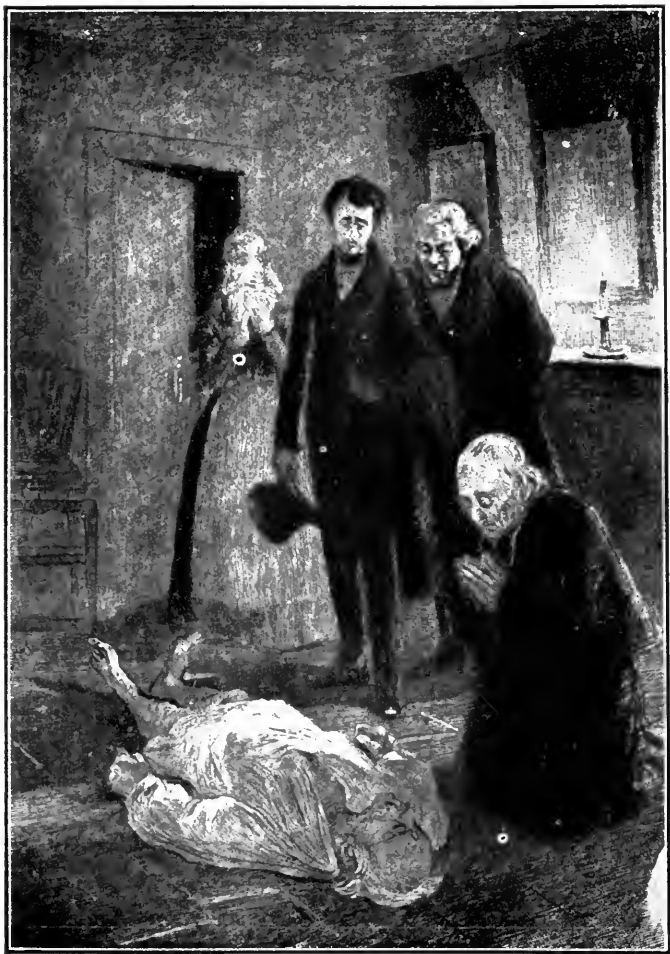
Mourning and lamentation were in that room. The maid-servant was weeping in a corner, the priest was praying and sobbing, the physician wiped his eyes; the corpse itself wept.

The physician, priest and woman looked at Marius through their affliction without saying a word. Marius, who was so little affected, felt ashamed and embarrassed at his own attitude, and he let the hat, which he held in his hand, fall to the ground, in order to induce a belief that sorrow deprived him of the strength to hold it. At the same he felt a sort of remorse, and despised himself for acting thus. But was it his fault? He did not love his father. Why should he!

The colonel left nothing, and the sale of the furniture scarce covered the funeral expenses.

The maid-servant found a scrap of paper, which she handed to Marius. On it were the following lines, written by the colonel:—

"For my son: The Emperor made me a baron on the field of Waterloo. As the Restoration disputes my right to this title, which I purchased with my blood, my son will assume it and wear it. Of course he will be worthy of it."



"The physician and the priest were summoned, but both arrived too late; the son had also arrived too late."

Les Misérables. Marius: Page 58.

On the back the colonel had added:—

“At this same battle of Waterloo a sergeant saved my life; his name is Thénardier, and I believe that he has recently kept a small inn in a village near Paris, either Chelles or Montfermeil. If my son meet this Thénardier he will do all he can for him.”

Not through any affection for his father, but owing to that vague respect for death which is ever so imperious in the heart of man, Marius took the paper and put it away.

Nothing was left of the colonel. M. Gillenormand sold his sword and uniform to an old-clothes man; the neighbours plundered the garden and carried off the rare flowers. The other plants became brambles and died.

Marius remained only forty-eight hours in Vernon. After the funeral he returned to Paris and his legal studies, thinking no more of his father than if he had never existed. In two days the colonel was buried, and in three forgotten.

Marius wore crape on his hat, and that was all.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVANTAGE OF GOING TO MASS, TO TURN REVOLUTIONIST

MARIUS had retained the religious habits of his childhood. One Sunday, when he went to hear Mass at St. Sulpice, in the same Lady's chapel to which his aunt took him when a boy, being on that day more than usually absent-minded and thoughtful, he placed himself behind a pillar, and knelt, without paying attention to the fact, upon a plush chair, on the back of which was written, “Monsieur Mabœuf, churchwarden.” The Mass had scarce begun when an old gentleman presented himself and said to Marius:—

“This is my place, sir.”

Marius at once stepped aside, and the old gentleman took his seat.

When Mass was ended Marius stood, lost in thought, a few steps away; the old gentleman came up to him and said:—

“I ask your pardon, sir, for having disturbed you just now, and for troubling you afresh now; but you must have considered me ill-bred, and so I wish to explain the matter to you.”

“It is unnecessary, sir,” said Marius.

“No, it is not,” continued the old man, “for I do not wish you to have a bad opinion of me. I am attached to this seat, and it seems to me that the Mass is better from here, and I will tell you why. To this spot, I saw for ten years, at regular intervals of two or three months, a poor, good father come who had no other opportunity or way of seeing his son, because they were separated through family arrangements. He came at the hour when he knew that his son would be brought to Mass. The boy did not suspect that his father was here,—perhaps did not know, poor innocent, that he had a father. The latter kept behind a pillar so that he might not be seen, looked at his child and wept; for the poor man adored the little fellow, as I could see. This spot has become as it were, hallowed to me, and I have fallen into the habit of hearing Mass here. I prefer it to the bench to which I have a right as church-warden. I knew the unfortunate gentleman slightly. He had a father-in-law, a rich aunt, and other relatives, who threatened to disinherit the boy if the father ever saw him; and he sacrificed himself that his son might one day be rich and happy. They were separated on account of political opinions; and though I certainly approve of political opinions, there are persons who do not know where to stop.”

“Good gracious! because a man was at Waterloo, he is not a monster; a father should not be separated from his child on that account. He was one of Bonaparte’s colonels, and is dead I believe. He lived at Vernon, where my brother

is priest, and his name was something like Pontmarie, Montpercy. He had, on my word, a splendid sabre-cut."

"Pontmercy!" said Marius, turning pale.

"Precisely, Pontmercy; did you know him?"

"He was my father, sir."

The old churchwarden clasped his hands and exclaimed:—

"Ah, you are the boy! Yes, yes, he would be a man now. Well, poor boy, you may say that you had a father who loved you dearly."

Marius offered his arm to the old gentleman, and conducted him to his house.

The next day he said to M. Gillenormand:—

"Some friends of mine have arranged a shooting party; will you allow me to go away for three days?"

"Four," answered the grandfather; "go and amuse yourself."

He whispered to his daughter with a wink:—

"Some love affair."

CHAPTER VI

THE RESULT OF MEETING A CHURCHWARDEN

WHERE Marius went, we shall learn presently. He was away three days, then returned to Paris, went straight to the Library of the Law-School, and asked for a file of the "Moniteur."

He read it; he read all the histories of the Republic and the Empire; the Memorial of St. Helena, all the memoirs, journals, bulletins, and proclamations,—he fairly devoured them. The first time that he came across his father's name in a bulletin of the Grand Army, he had a fever for a whole week. He called upon the generals under whom George Pontmercy had served; among others, Count H——. The

churchwarden, Mabœuf, whom he went to see again, told him of the life at Vernon, the colonel's retirement, his flowers, and his solitude. Marius at last acquired a perfect knowledge of that rare, sublime, and gentle man,—that species of lion-lamb,—who had been his father.

While occupied with this study, which filled all his moments as well as all his thoughts, he scarce ever saw the Gillenormands. He appeared at meals, but when sought for after them, he could not be found. His aunt sulked, but old Gillenormand smiled. "Pooh! pooh! he is just the age for girls." Sometimes the old man would add; "Confound it, I thought that it was an affair of gallantry, but it seems that it is a passion."

It was a passion, in truth; for Marius was beginning to adore his father.

At the same time an extraordinary change took place in his ideas, and the phases of this change were numerous and successive. As this is the history of many minds in our day, we deem it useful to follow these phases step by step, and to indicate them all.

The history which he had just read startled him, and the first effect was bewildering.

The Republic, the Empire, had hitherto been to him but monstrous words,—the Republic, a guillotine in the twilight; the Empire, a sabre in the night. He had looked into it, and where he expected to find only a chaos of darkness, he had seen, with a sort of extraordinary surprise mingled with fear and delight, flashing stars,—Mirabeau, Vergniaud, St. Just, Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, and Danton,—and a sun rise, Napoleon. He knew not where he was; and he shrank back, blinded by the brilliancy. Gradually, when the first surprise had worn off, he grew accustomed to this radiance. He considered those deeds without dizziness, and examined those personages without terror; the Revolution and the Empire stood out in luminous perspective before his mental vision. He saw each of these groups of events and facts summed up in two tremendous facts,—the Revolution in the

sovereignty of civic right restored to the masses, the Empire in the sovereignty of the French idea imposed on Europe; he saw the great figure of the people emerge from the Revolution, the great figure of France from the Empire; and he declared to himself in his conscience that all this was good.

What was his bewilderment neglected in this first appreciation, which was far too synthetic, we do not think it necessary to indicate here. We are describing the state of a mind on the march. Progress is not completed in a single stage. This said, once for all, in regard to what precedes and what is to follow, we will continue.

He then perceived that up to this moment he had understood his country no better than he had his father. He had known neither the one nor the other, and a sort of voluntary night blinded his eyes. He now saw; and on one side he admired, on the other he adored.

He was full of regret and remorse, and he thought with despair that he could now tell only to a tomb all that he had in his mind. Of, if his father were alive, if he still had him, if God in His compassion and His goodness had allowed his father to be still alive, how he would have hastened, how he would have rushed, how he would have cried to his father: "Father! Here I am! It is I! I have the same heart as you! I am your son!" How he would have kissed his white head, bathed his hair with his tears, gazed at his scar, pressed his hands, adored his clothes, and embraced his feet! Oh, why did his father die so soon, before his time, before justice had been done him, before he had known his son's love? Marius had a constant sob in his heart, which perpetually said: "Alas!" At the same time, he became more truly serious, more truly grave, more sure of his faith and his thought. At each instant, gleams of truth came to complete his reason; an inward growth seemed going on within him. He was conscious of a sort of natural increase produced by the two things so new to him,—his father and his country.

As a door is easily opened when we hold the key, so he explained to himself what he had hated, and understood what

he had abhorred. Henceforth he saw clearly the providential, divine, and human meaning of the great things which he had been taught to detest, and the great men whom he had been instructed to curse. When he thought of his former opinions, which were but of yesterday, and which yet seemed to him so old, he felt indignant, and yet he smiled.

From the rehabilitation of his father, he had naturally passed to that of Napoleon; but the latter, we must confess, was not effected without labour.

From childhood he had been imbued with the judgments of the party of 1814 about Bonaparte; now, all the prejudices of the Restoration, all its interests and all its instincts, tended to disfigure Napoleon, and it execrated him even more than it did Robespierre. It had rather cleverly profited by the weariness of the nation and the hatred of mothers. Bonaparte had become a sort of fabulous monster; and in order to depict him to the imagination of the people, which, as we said just now resembles that of children, the party of 1814 brought him forward in turn under all sorts of frightful masks, from those which are terrible, although still grand, down to those which are terrible and also grotesque,—from Tiberius down to old Bogy. Hence, in speaking of Bonaparte, people were at liberty to sob or to burst with laughter, provided that hatred underlay the feeling. Marius had never had on the subject of "*that man*," as he was called, any other ideas but these in his mind; and they were combined with his natural tenacity. There was a headstrong little man within him who hated Napoleon.

On reading history, on studying him, especially in historical documents and materials, the veil which hid Napoleon from Marius's sight was gradually rent asunder; he caught a glimpse of something immense, and suspected that up to this moment he had been mistaken about Bonaparte, as about all the rest. Each day he saw more clearly; and he began to climb slowly, step by step, almost reluctantly at first, then with intoxication, and as if attracted by an irresistible facination, first, the gloomy steps, then the dimly lighted steps,

and at last the luminous and splendid steps of enthusiasm.

One night he was alone in his little garret, his candle was lighted, and he was reading at a table by the open window. All sorts of reveries reached him from space, and mingled with his thoughts. What a spectacle is night! We hear dull sounds and know not whence they come; we see Jupiter, which is twelve hundred times larger than the earth, glowing like a fire-ball; the blue sky is black, the stars sparkle, and the whole forms a formidable sight.

He was reading the bulletins of the Grand Army, those Homeric strophes written on the battle-field; he saw in them at intervals his father's name, and ever that of the Emperor. The whole of the great empire rose before him; he felt, as it were, a tide within him swelling and mounting; it seemed at moments as if his father passed close to him like a breath, and whispered in his ear; strange feelings gradually overcame him; he fancied that he heard drums, cannon, and bugles, the measured tread of battalions and the dull, distant gallop of cavalry. From time to time his eyes were raised heavenward and surveyed the colossal constellations flashing in the measureless depths; then they fell again upon the book, and there he saw other colossal things stirring confusedly. His heart was contracted, he was transported, trembling and gasping; and all at once, without knowing what was within him or what impulse he obeyed, he sprang up, stretched his arms out of the window, and looked fixedly into the shadow, the silence, the dark infinitude, the eternal immensity, and shouted, "Long live the Emperor!"

From this moment all was over. The ogre of Corsica, the usurper, the tyrant, the monster who was the lover of his own sisters, the actor who took lessons of Talma, the poisoner of Jaffa, the tiger, Bonaparte,—all this faded away and gave place in his mind to a vague, bright radiance in which the pale marble phantom of Cæsar shone serenely at an inaccessible height. The Emperor had never been to his father more than the beloved captain whom a man admires, and for whom he sacrifices self; but to Marius he was far more. He was

the predestined constructor of the French group, which succeeded the Roman group in the dominion of the universe; he was the prodigious architect of an earthquake, the successor of Charlemagne, Louis XI., Henri IV., Richelieu, Louis XIV., and the Committee of Public Safety. He had doubtless his blemishes, his faults, and even his crimes,—that is to say, he was a man; but he was august in his faults, brilliant in his blemishes, and powerful in his crime.

He was the predestined man who compelled all nations to say,—“The great nation!” He was even more; he was the very incarnation of France, conquering Europe by the sword which he held, and the world by the lustre which he emitted. Marius saw in Bonaparte the dazzling spectre which will ever stand on the frontier and guard the future. He was a despot, but a dictator,—a despot resulting from a republic, and summing up a revolution. Napoleon became for him the man-people, as the Saviour is the man-God.

As we see, after the fashion of all new converts to religion, his conversion intoxicated him; he dashed headlong into faith and went too far. His nature was such; once upon a downward slope, it was impossible to check himself. Fanaticism for the sword seized upon him, and complicated in his mind enthusiasm for the idea. He did not perceive that he admired force as well as genius,—that is to say, installed in the two shrines of his idolatry, on one side that which is divine, on the other that which is brutal. He also deceived himself on several other points, though in a different way. He admitted everything. There is a way of encountering error by going to meet the truth. He had a sort of violent good faith which accepts everything unconditionally. In the new path on which he had entered, in judging the errors of the ancient régime as in measuring the glory of Napoleon, he neglected the attenuating circumstances.

However this might be, a prodigious step had been taken. Where he had once seen the downfall of monarchy he now saw the accession of France. The points of his moral compass were changed, and what had once been sunset was now sunrise,

All these revolutions took place within him, without his family suspecting it.

When, in this mysterious labour, he had entirely lost his old Bourbonic and ultra skin, when he had cast off the aristocrat, the Jacobin, and the royalist, when he was a perfect revolutionist, profoundly democratic, and almost republican, he went to an engraver and ordered one hundred cards, with the address, "Baron Marius Pontmercy."

This was but the logical consequence of the change which had taken place in him,—a change in which everything gravitated round his father.

Still, as he knew nobody, and could not leave his cards at anybody's door, he put them in his pocket.

By another natural consequence, in proportion as he drew nearer to his father, to his memory, and to the things for which the colonel had fought during five-and-twenty years, he drew away from his grandfather. As we said, M. Gillenormand's humour had not suited him for a long time past, and there already existed between them all the dissonances produced by the contact of a grave young man with a frivolous old man. The gayety of *Géronte* offends and exasperates the melancholy of *Werther*. So long as the same political opinions and ideas had been common to them both, Marius met his grandfather upon them as on a bridge, but when the bridge fell there was a great gulf between them; and then, besides all else, Marius had indescribable attacks of revolt when he reflected that it was M. Gillenormand, who, from stupid motives, pitilessly tore him from the colonel, thus depriving father of son and son of father.

Through his reverence for his father, Marius had almost grown into an aversion for his grandfather.

Nothing of this, however, was revealed in his demeanour. He merely became colder than before, laconic at meals, and was rarely at home. When his aunt scolded him for it, he was very gentle, and alleged as excuse his studies, examinations, lectures, etc. His grandfather, however, still adhered

to his infallible diagnosis,—“He is in love; I know the symptoms.”

Marius was absent every now and then.

“Where does he go?” asked the aunt.

In one of his trips, which were always very short, he went to Montfermeil in order to obey his father’s injunction, and sought for the ex-sergeant of Waterloo, Thénardier, the tavern-keeper. Thénardier had failed, the public-house was shut up, and no one knew what had become of him. In making this search, Marius remained away for four days.

“He is getting decidedly dissipated,” said his grandfather.

They also thought they noticed that he wore something under his shirt fastened round his neck by a black ribbon.

CHAPTER VII

SOME PETTICOAT

WE have alluded to a lancer.

He was a great-grand-nephew of M. Gillenormand, on the father’s side, who led a garrison life, far away from the domestic hearth. Lieutenant Théodule Gillenormand fulfilled all the conditions required to make a handsome officer; he had a “lady’s waist,” a victorious way of clanking his sabre, and turned-up mustaches. He came very rarely to Paris, — so rarely that Marius had never seen him, and the two cousins knew each other only by name. Théodule was, we think we said, the favourite of Aunt Gillenormand, who preferred him because she never saw him; for not seeing people allows us to attribute every possible perfection to them.

One morning Mlle. Gillenormand the elder returned to her apartments as much affected as her general placidity would allow. Marius had again asked his grandfather’s permission

to make a short trip, adding that he wished to start that same evening. "Go," answered the grandfather; and he added to himself, as he raised his eyebrows to the very top of his forehead, "Another fit of sleeping from home." Mlle. Gillenormand went up to her room greatly puzzled, and on the staircase dropped this exclamation, "It's too much!" and this question, "But where does he go?" She spied some more or less illicit love affair,—some woman in the shadow; a meeting, a mystery, and would not have been sorry to get a closer look at it through her spectacles. Scenting a mystery is like the first bite at a piece of scandal, and holy souls are not averse to this. In the secret compartments of bigotry there is some curiosity for scandal.

She was, therefore, suffering from a vague appetite to learn a story. In order to distract this curiosity, which agitated her a little beyond her wont, she took refuge in her talents, and began scalloping, with cotton upon cotton one of those embroideries of the Empire and the Restoration, in which there are a great many cart-wheels. It was a clumsy job, and the workwoman was cross. She had been sitting over it for some hours when the door opened. Mlle. Gillenormand raised her nose; Lieutenant Théodule stood before her, making his regulation salute. She uttered a cry of delight; for a woman may be old, a prude, devout, and an aunt, but she is always glad to see a lancer enter her room.

"You here, Théodule!" she exclaimed.

"On my way through town, aunt."

"Well, kiss me."

"There!" said Théodule as he kissed her. Aunt Gillenormand walked to her secretary and opened it.

"You will stop the week out?"

"My dear aunt, I am off again to-night."

"Impossible!"

"Yet it is so."

"Stay, my dear Théodule, I entreat you."

"My heart says Yes, but duty says No. The story is very simple: we are changing garrison; we were at Melun and are

sent to Gaillon. In order to reach the new garrison, we were obliged to pass through Paris; and I said to myself; 'I will go and see my aunt.'"

"And here's for your trouble."

And she slipped ten louis into his hand.

"You mean to say for my pleasure, dear aunt."

Théodule kissed her a second time, and she had the pleasure of having her neck slightly scratched by his gold-laced collar.

"Are you travelling on horseback with your regiment?"

"No, aunt; I come to see you by special permission. My servant is leading my horse, and I shall travel by the diligence. By the way, there is one thing I want to ask you."

"What is it?"

"It appears that my cousin, Marius Pontmercy, is going on a journey, too."

"How do you know that?" said the aunt, her curiosity being greatly tickled.

"On reaching Paris I went to the coach-office to take my place in the *coupé*."

"Well?"

"A traveller had already taken a seat in the imperial, and I saw his name in the way-bill; it was Marius Pontmercy."

"Oh, the scamp!" exclaimed the aunt. "Ah, your cousin is not a steady lad like you. To think that he is to pass the night in a diligence!"

"Like myself."

"But it is your duty! he does it from dissipation."

"The deuce!" said Théodule.

Here an event occurred to Mlle. Gillenormand the elder; she had an idea. Had she been a man she would have slapped her forehead. She addressed Théodule:

"Do you know whether your cousin knows you?"

"No. I have seen him; but he never deigned to notice me."

"You are sure that you are to travel together?"

"He in the imperial, I in the *coupé*."

"Where does this diligence run?"

"To Andelys."

"Is Marius going there?"

"Unless he stops on the road, like myself. I get out at Vernon to take the Gaillon coach. I know nothing about Marius's route."

"Marius! what an odious name! What an idea to call him Marius! Well, your name, at least, is Théodule."

"I would rather it was Alfred," said the officer.

"Listen, Théodule."

"I am listening, aunt."

"Pay attention."

"I am paying attention."

"You hear me?"

"Yes."

"Well, Marius absents himself from home."

"Eh, eh!"

"He travels about the country."

"Ah, ah!"

"He sleeps out."

"Oh, oh!"

"We should like to know the meaning of all this."

Théodule replied, with the calmness of a man of bronze, "some petticoat!" And with that inward chuckle which denotes certainty, he added: "a girl!"

"That is evident!" exclaimed the aunt, who thought she heard M. Gillenormand speak, and who felt her conviction become irresistible at the word "girl," accenuated almost in the selfsame way by grand-uncle and grand-nephew. She continued:—

"Do us a favour. Follow Marius a little. As he does not know you, it will be an easy matter. Since there is a girl in the case, try to get a look at her; and write and tell us all about it, for it will amuse his grandfather."

Théodule had no excessive inclination for this sort of spying, but he was greatly affected by the ten louis, and he thought he saw a chance for the continuation of such gifts.

He accepted the commission, and said, "As you please, aunt," and added in an aside, "I am a duenna now!"

Mlle. Gillenormand kissed him.

"You would not play such tricks as that, Théodule. You obey orders, are the slave of duty, and a scrupulous fellow. You would never leave your family to go and see a *creature*."

The lancer made the satisfied grimace of Cartouche when praised for his probity.

Marius, on the evening following this dialogue, got into the diligence, not suspecting that he was watched. As for the watcher, the first thing he did was to fall asleep, and his sleep was complete and conscientious. Argus snored the whole night.

At daybreak the guard shouted, "Vernon; passengers for Vernon, get out here!" and Lieutenant Théodule awoke.

"All right," he growled, still half asleep; "I get out here."

Then, his memory growing gradually clearer, he thought of his aunt, the ten louis, and the account he had promised to render of Marius's sayings and doings. This made him laugh.

"He is probably no longer in the coach," he thought, as he rebuttoned the waistcoat of his undress uniform. "He may have stopped at Poissy; he may have stopped at Triel; if he did not get out at Meulan, he may have done so at Mantes, unless he stopped at Rolleboise, or only went as far as Passy, with the choice of turning to the left at Estreux, or to the right to La Rocheguyon. Run after him, aunty. What the deuce shall I write to the old lady?"

At this moment the leg of a black trouser descending from the imperial appeared at the window of the *coupé*.

"Can it be Marius?" said the lieutenant.

It was Marius.

A little peasant girl in among the horses and the postilions, at the end of the coach, was offering flowers to the passengers, and crying, "Bouquets for your ladies."

Marius went up to her, and bought the finest flowers in her basket.

"By jove!" said Théodule, as he leaped out of the *coupé*, "this is growing piquant. Who the deuce is he going to carry those flowers to? She must be a deucedly pretty woman to deserve so handsome a bouquet. I must have a look at her."

And then he followed Marius, no longer by order, but from personal curiosity, like those dogs which hunt on their own account.

Marius paid no attention to Théodule. Some elegant women got out of the diligence, but he did not look at them; he seemed to see nothing around him.

"He must be precious deep in love," thought Théodule.

Marius proceeded toward the church.

"That's good!" Théodule said to himself. "The church, that's the thing. Rendezvous spiced with a small amount of Mass are the best sort. Nothing is so exquisite as an ogle exchanged in the presence of the Virgin."

On reaching the church, Marius did not enter, but disappeared behind one of the buttresses of the apse.

"The meeting is to be outside," said Théodule; "now for a look at the girl." And he walked on tiptoe to the corner which Marius had just turned.

On reaching it, he stopped in amazement.

Marius, with his head in his hands, was kneeling in the grass upon a grave, and had strewed his flowers over it. At the head of the grave was a black wooden cross, with this name in white letters: "COLONEL BARON PONTMEUCY." Marius was sobbing.

The "girl" was a tomb.

CHAPTER VIII

MARBLE AGAINST GRANITE

IT was hither that Marius had come the first time that he had absented himself from Paris; it was to this spot he had returned every time that M. Gillenormand said, "He sleeps out."

Lieutenant Théodule was absolutely disconcerted by this unexpected elbowing with a tomb; he felt a singular and disagreeable sensation, which he was incapable of analyzing, and which was composed of respect for a tomb mingled with respect for a colonel. He fell back, leaving Marius alone in the cemetery, and there was discipline in his retreat; death appeared to him with heavy epaulets, and he almost made the military salute. Not knowing what to write to his aunt, he resolved not to write at all; and there would probably have been no result from Théodule's discovery in regard to Marius's love affair, had not, by one of those mysterious arrangements so frequent in accident, the scene at Vernon had an almost immediate counterpart in Paris.

Marius returned from Vernon very early on the morning of the third day, and wearied by two nights spent in a diligence, and feeling the need of repairing his loss of sleep by an hour at the swimming-school, he hurried to his room, laid aside his travelling coat and the black ribbon which he wore round his neck, and went to the bath.

M. Gillenormand, who rose at an early hour like all old men who are in good health, heard him come in, and hastened as quickly as his old legs would carry him, up the stairs leading to Marius's garret, in order to welcome him back, and to try and find out where he had been.

But the young man had taken less time to descend than the octogenarian to ascend, and when Father Gillenormand entered the garret Marius was no longer there.

The bed had not been occupied, and on it lay the coat and black ribbon, unsuspectingly.

"I prefer that," said M. Gillenormand.

A moment later he entered the drawing-room, where Mlle. Gillenormand the elder was already seated, embroidering her cart-wheels.

The entrance was triumphant. M. Gillenormand held in one hand the coat, in the other the neck-ribbon, and shouted:—

"Victory! we will now penetrate the mystery; we shall learn the cream of the joke; we will lay our finger on the libertinage of our sly gentleman. Here is the romance itself. I have the portrait!"

In fact, a box of shagreen leather, much like a miniature case, hung from the ribbon.

The old man took this box and looked at it for some time without opening it, with the air of pleasure, eagerness, and anger of a poor starving fellow who sees a splendid dinner, which he is not to share, carried past under his very nose.

"It is evidently a portrait. I am up to that sort of thing. It is worn tenderly on the heart,—what asses they are! Some horrid fright, who will probably make us shudder. Young men have such bad taste nowadays."

"Let us look, father," said the old maid.

The case opened by pressing a spring, but they found it only a carefully folded paper.

"*From the same to the same*," said M. Gillenormand, bursting into a laugh. "I know what it is,— a love letter!"

"Indeed! let us read it," said the aunt.

She put on her spectacles. They unfolded the paper and read as follows. —

"*For my son.* The Emperor made me a baron on the field of Waterloo. As the Restoration disputes my right to this title, which I purchased with my blood, my son will assume it and wear it. Of course he will be worthy of it."

The feelings of father and daughter cannot be described; but they were chilled as if by the breath of a death's head. They did not exchange a syllable.

M. Gillenormand merely said in a low voice, and as if speaking to himself:—

“It is that slasher's handwriting.”

The aunt examined the slip of paper, turned it about in all directions, and then replaced it in the box.

At the same instant a small square packet, wrapped in blue paper, fell from a pocket of the coat. Mlle. Gillenormand picked it up and opened the blue paper.

It contained Marius's one hundred cards, and she passed one to M. Gillenormand, who read, “Baron Marius Pontmercy.”

The old man rang, and Nicolette came in. M. Gillenormand took the ribbon, the box, and the coat, threw them on the floor in the middle of the room, and said:

“Remove that rubbish!”

A long hour passed in the deepest silence; the old man and the old maid sat back to back, thinking, probably, each of the same things.

At the end of this hour, Mlle. Gillenormand said:—

“A pretty state of things!”

A few minutes after, Marius came in. Even before he crossed the threshold he saw his grandfather holding one of his cards in his hand. As Marius entered he exclaimed, with an air of petty, grinning superiority, which was crushing:—

“Well! well! well! well! well! So you are a baron now; I must congratulate you. What does this mean?”

Marius blushed slightly and answered:—

“It means that I am my father's son.”

M. Gillenormand left off laughing, and said harshly, “I am your father.”

“My father,” Marius replied, with downcast eyes and a stern air, “was a humble and heroic man who gloriously served the Republic and France, who was great in the greatest history which men have ever made, who lived for a quar-

ter of a century in a camp, exposed to a shower of grape-shot and bullets by day, and in snow, mud, wind, and rain at night. He was a man who captured two flags, received twenty wounds, died forgotten and forsaken, and who never committed but one mistake,—that of loving too dearly two ungrateful beings; his country and myself.”

This was more than M. Gillenormand could bear; at the word *republic* he rose, or rather sprang up. Every word that Marius had just uttered produced on the old gentleman's face the same effect as the blast of a forge-bellows upon a burning log. From a leaden hue he became red, from red, purple, and from purple, flaming.

“Marius,” he shouted, “you abominable boy! I know not what your father was,—I do not wish to know. I know nothing about him. I do not know him. But what I do know is, that there never were any but scoundrels among those people; they were all rogues, assassins, red caps, robbers! I say, all,—I say, all! I know none of them! I say, all; do you understand me, Marius? Look here! You are no more of a baron than my slipper is! They were all bandits who served Robespierre! they were all brigands who served B-u-o-naparté; all traitors who betrayed, betrayed, betrayed their legitimate king! all cowards who ran away from the Prussians and the English at Waterloo. That is what I know. If your father was one of them, I am ignorant of the fact! I am sorry for it. So much the worse, your humble servant!”

In his turn, Marius became the brand, and M. Gillenormand the bellows. Marius trembled from head to foot; he knew not what to do, and his brain burned. He was the priest who sees his consecrated wafers cast to the wind, the fakir who beholds a passer-by spit on his idol. Such things must not be uttered with impunity in his presence, but what was he to do? His father had just been trampled under foot and insulted in his presence, but by whom? By his grandfather. How was he to avenge the one without outraging the other? It was impossible for him to insult his grandfather, and

equally impossible for him to leave his father unavenged. On one side was a sacred tomb, on the other was white hair.

He reeled for a few moments like a drunken man, then raised his eyes, looked fixedly at his grandfather, and shouted in a voice of thunder:—

“Down with the Bourbons and that great pig of a Louis XVIII.!”

Louis XVIII. had been dead four years, but that made no difference to him.

The old man, who had been scarlet, suddenly became whiter than his hair. He turned to a bust of the Duke de Berry which stood on the mantelpiece, and bowed to its profoundly with singular majesty. Then he walked twice, slowly and silently, from the mantelpiece to the window, and from the window to the mantelpiece, traversing the whole length of the room, and making the boards creak as if he were a walking marble statue.

The second time, he bent over his daughter, who was watching the disturbance with the stupor of an old sheep, and said to her with a smile which was almost calm:—

“A baron like this gentleman and a tradesman like myself can no longer remain beneath the same roof.”

And suddenly drawing himself up, livid, trembling, and terrible, his brow made more lofty by the fearful radiance of wrath, he stretched his arm toward Marius, and shouted:—

“Begone!”

Marius left the house.

Next day M. Gillenormand said to his daughter:—

“You will send sixty pistoles every six months to that blood-drinker, and never mention his name to me.”

Having an immense amount of fury to expend, and not knowing what to do with it, he continued to address his daughter as “you” instead of “thou” for upward of three months.

Marius, on his side, left the house indignant. One circumstance, it must be admitted, aggravated his exasperation. There are always small fatalities of this nature to complicate

domestic dramas. They increase the grievance, although nothing is really added to the wrongs. In hurriedly conveying, by his grandfather's order, Marius's "rubbish" to his bedroom, Nicolette, without observing it, let fall, probably on the attic stairs, which were dark, the black shagreen case containing the paper written by the colonel. As neither could be found, Marius felt convinced that "Monsieur Gillenormand"—he never called him otherwise from that date—had thrown "his father's will" into the fire. He knew by heart the few lines written by the colonel, and, consequently, nothing was lost; but the paper, the writing, that sacred relic,—all that was his very heart. What had been done with it?

Marius went away without saying where he was going and without knowing, with thirty francs, his watch, and some clothes in a carpet-bag. He jumped into a cab, engaged it by the hour, and proceeded at haphazard towards the Latin Quarter.

What would become of Marius?

BOOK IV.

THE FRIENDS OF THE A. B. C.

CHAPTER I

A GROUP THAT BARELY MISSED BECOMING HISTORIC

AT that epoch, which was apparently careless, a certain revolutionary quiver was vaguely felt. There were breezes in the air which started from the depths of '89 and '92; and young men, if we may be forgiven the expression, were in the moulting stage. Men were transformed, almost without suspecting it, by the mere movement of time; for the hand which moves round the dial also moves in the mind. Each took the forward step which he was bound to take; royalists became liberals, and liberals turned democrats. It was a rising tide complicated by a thousand ebbs, and it is the peculiarity of ebbs to cause things to mingle. Hence the combination of very singular ideas: men adored both liberty and Napoleon. We are writing history here, and such were the mirages of that period. Opinions pass through phases; and Voltairean royalism, an odd variety, had a no less strange counterpart, Bonapartist liberalism.

Other groups of minds were more serious; here principles were sounded, and there men clung to their rights. They became enthusiastic for the absolute, and obtained glimpses of infinite realizations; for the absolute, by its very rigidity, urges souls toward the azure, and causes them to float in illimitable space. There is nothing like dogma to originate

dreams, and nothing like dreams to engender the future! the Utopia of to-day is flesh and bone to-morrow.

Advanced opinions had a false bottom. A beginning of mystery threatened "the established order of things," which was suspicious and sly. This is a most revolutionary sign. The after-thoughts of authority meet the after-thoughts of the people midway in their undermining. The incubation of revolutions is the reply to the premeditation of *coups d'état*.

There were not as yet in France any of those vast underlying organizations, like the *tugendbund* of Germany, or the Carbonari of Italy; but here and there were dark subterranean passages with extensive ramifications. The Cougourde was being planned at Aix; and there existed at Paris, among other affiliations of this nature, the society of the Friends of the A. B. C.

What were these Friends of the A. B. C.? A society whose ostensible object was to educate children, but the real one to elevate man.

They called themselves Friends of the A. B. C.,—the *abaissés*, the abused; that is, the people. They wished to elevate the people. It would be wrong to laugh at this pun, for puns are sometimes serious factors in politics,—witness the *Castratus ad castra*, which made Narses general of an army; the *Barbari* and *Barberini*; *Fueros y Fuegos*; *tu es Petrus et super hanc Petram*, etc.

The Friends of the A. B. C. were few in number; it was a secret society, in a state of embryo; we might almost call it a coterie, if coteries produced heroes. They assembled at two places in Paris,—at a tavern called "Corinth" near the markets, to which we shall return hereafter, and near the Pantheon in a small café on the Place St. Michel, known as the Café Musain, now demolished; the first of these meeting-places was convenient for the workmen, and the second for the students.

The ordinary meetings of the Friends of the A. B. C. were held in a back room of the Café Musain.

This room, at some distance from the coffee-room, with

which it communicated, by a very long passage, had two windows and an exit by a private staircase into the Little Rue des Grés. There they smoked, drank, gambled, and laughed; they talked very loudly about everything, and in a whisper about other things. On the wall hung an old map of France under the republic, which would have been enough to put a police agent on the scent.

Most of the Friends of the A. B. C. were students, who were on cordial terms with certain workmen. Here are the names of the principal members, which belong in a certain measure to history; Enjolras, Combeferre, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Courfeyrac, Bahorel, Lesgle or Laigle, Joly, and Grantaire.

These young men formed a sort of family through their friendship, and all came from the South except Laigle.

This group was a remarkable one. It vanished in the invisible depths which lie behind us. At the point of this drama which we have now reached, it will not be labour lost, perhaps, to throw a ray of light upon these youthful heads before the reader sees them plunged in the shadows of a tragic adventure.

Enjolras, whom we named first,— we shall see why, later on, — was an only son, and rich.

He was a charming young man, capable of becoming terrible; he was angelically beautiful, a fierce Antinous. From the pensive depth of his glance, you might have fancied that he had gone through the revolutionary apocalypse in some preceding existence. He knew its traditions as if he had been an eye-witness, and was acquainted with all the minor details of the great affair. His was a priestly and warlike nature, strange in a young man. He was a churchman and a man of war; from the immediate point of view, a soldier of the democracy, but, above the contemporary movement, a priest of the ideal. His eyes were deep-set, his lids slightly red, his lower lip thick and easily disdainful, and his forehead high. A good deal of forehead in a face is like a good deal of sky in a horizon. Like certain young men at the beginning of this

century and the end of the last, who became illustrious at an early age, he looked excessively young, and was as rosy as a school-girl, though he had his hours of pallor. Although a man, he seemed still a boy, and his two-and-twenty years seemed but seventeen; he was serious, and did not appear to know that there was such a being on earth as woman. He had but one passion,— the right; and but one thought,— to overthrow the obstacle. On Mons Aventinus he would have been Gracchus; in the Convention he would have been St. Just. He scarcely saw the roses, he ignored the spring, and did not hear the birds sing; the bare throat of Evadne would have affected him as little as it did Aristogiton. To him, as to Harmodius, flowers were only good to conceal the sword. He was stern in his enjoyments, and before everything that was not the republic he chastely lowered his eyes; he was the marble lover of liberty. His language had a sharp inspiration and a sort of rhythmic strain. He had unexpected expansions of soul. Woe to the girl who ventured to ensnare him! If any grisette of the Place Cambray, or the Rue St. Jean de Beauvais, seeing that face so like that of a collegian out of bounds, that page's figure, his long, golden lashes, his blue eyes, his hair floating wildly in the breeze, his pink cheeks, cherry lips, and exquisite teeth, had felt a longing for all that dawn, and tried the effect of her charms upon Enjolras, a terrible look of surprise would have suddenly shown her the abyss, and taught her not to confound the awful cherub of Ezekiel with the gallant Cherubino of Beaumarchais.

By the side of Enjolras, who represented the logic of the Revolution, Combeferre represented its philosophy. Between the logic and the philosophy of the Revolution there is this difference; the logic may end in war, while the philosophy can only lead to peace. Combeferre completed and rectified Enjolras; he was not so tall, but broader. He longed to pour the ample principles of general ideas into all minds. He said: "Revolution, but civilization!" and he opened up the vast blue horizon around the mountain-peak. Hence there was something accessible and practicable in all Combeferre's views;

and the Revolution with him was better suited to breathing than with Enjolras. Enjolras expressed its divine right, and Combeferre its natural right; and while the former clung to Robespierre, the latter confined himself to Condorcet. Combeferre lived the ordinary life of mankind more than did Enjolras. If these two young men had been permitted to gain a place in history, the one would have been the just man, the other the sage. Enjolras was more manly, Combeferre more humane; and the distinction between them was that between *homo* and *vir*. Combeferre was as gentle as Enjolras was severe, through natural whiteness; he loved the word "citizen," but preferred the word "man." He would have gladly said *hombre*, like the Spanish. He read everything, went to the theatres, attended public lectures, learned from Arago the polarization of light, and grew quite excited over a lecture in which Geoffroy St. Hilaire explained the double function of the external and internal carotid artery, the one which makes the face, and the other which produces the brain; he was conversant with all that was going on, followed science step by step, confronted St. Simon with Fourier, deciphered hieroglyphics, broke pebbles which he found, discussed geology, drew a silk-worm moth from memory, pointed out the errors in French in the dictionary of the Academy, studied Puysségur and Deleuze, affirmed nothing, not even miracles, denied nothing, not even ghosts; turned over the file of the "Moniteur" and reflected. He declared that the future lies in the hand of the schoolmaster, and busied himself with educational questions. He wished society to labour unceasingly to elevate the intellectual and moral standard, to coin science, to bring ideas into circulation, and make the minds of youth grow; and he feared that the present poverty of methods, the wretchedness from a literary point of view of confining studies to two or three centuries called classic, the tyrannical dogmatism of official pedants, scholastic prejudices, and routine would in the end convert our colleges into artificial oyster-beds. He was learned, a purist, polite, and polytechnic, a delver, and at the time pensive, "even to a chimera," as his friends said. He

believed in all dreams,— railways, the suppression of suffering in surgical operations, fixing the image of the camera obscura, the electric telegraph, and the steering of balloons. He was not much alarmed by the citadels built on all sides against the human race by superstitions, despotisms, and prejudices; for he was one of those men who think that science will, in the end, turn the position. Enjolras was a chief, and Combeferre a guide; you would like to fight under one and march with the other. Not that Combeferre was incapable of fighting. He did not refuse a hand-to-hand contest with obstacles, or to attack them by main force; but it pleased him better to bring the human race into harmony with its destiny, gradually, by teaching them axioms and promulgating positive laws; and with a choice between two lights, his inclination was for illumination rather than fire. A fire may certainly produce a dawn, but why not wait for daybreak? A volcano illumines, but the sun does so far better. Combeferre, perhaps, preferred the whiteness of the beautiful to the flashing of the sublime. A brightness clouded by smoke, progress purchased by violence, only half satisfied his tender and serious spirit. A headlong hurling of a people into the truth, a '93, startled him; stagnation was still more repulsive to him, for in it he detected putrefaction and death. Altogether he preferred scum to miasma, the torrent to the sewer, and the falls of Niagara to the Lake of Montfauçon. In a word, he desired neither halt nor haste; and while his tumultuous friends, who were chivalrously attracted by the absolute, adored and invoked splendid revolutionary adventures, Combeferre inclined to let progress — right progress — take its course. It might be cold, but it was pure, methodical, but irreproachable; phlegmatic, but imperturbable. Combeferre would have knelt and prayed that this future might come with all its candour, and that nothing might disturb the immense and virtuous evolution of the nations. *The good must be innocent*, he repeated incessantly. And in truth, if the grandeur of the Revolution is to gaze steadfastly at the dazzling ideal, and to fly toward it through the lightning, with blood

and fire in its talons, the beauty of progress is to be unspotted; and between Washington, who represents the one, and Danton, who is the incarnation of the other, the same difference exists as separates the angel with the swan's wings from the angel with the eagle's wings.

Jean Prouvaire was of an even softer tinge than Combeferre; he was called "Jehan," owing to that little momentary fancy which was blended with the powerful and profound movement whence issued the very necessary study of the middle ages. Jean Prouvaire was always in love, cultivated a pot of flowers, played a flute, wrote verses, loved the people, pitied women, wept over children, confounded in the same confidence, God and the future, and blamed the Revolution for having caused a royal head to fall,—that of André Chénier. His voice was usually soft, but suddenly became masculine; he was erudite, and almost an Orientalist. Above all, he was good,—a very simple thing to those who know how closely goodness borders on grandeur; in the matter of poetry, he preferred the immense. He knew Italian, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and he used his knowledge to read four poets only,—Dante, Juvenal, Æschylus, and Isaiah. In French, he preferred Corneille to Racine, and Agrippa d'Aubigné to Corneille. He was fond of strolling through fields of wild oats and corn-flowers, and occupied himself with clouds almost as much as with events. His mind had two attitudes,—one turned to man, the other to God; he either studied or contemplated. The whole day long he studied social questions,—wages, capital, credit, marriage, religion, liberty of thought, liberty of love, education, the penal code, wretchedness, partnership, property, production, and profit-sharing,—the enigma of the lower world, which casts a shadow over the human anthill; and at night he looked at the stars, those enormous beings. Like Enjolras, he was rich, and an only son; he talked softly, hung his head, looked down, smiled with embarrassment, dressed badly, had an awkward air, blushed at a mere nothing, and was very timid; with all this, he was intrepid.

Feuilly was a journeyman fan-maker, doubly an orphan, who laboriously earned three francs a day, and had but one idea,—to deliver the world. He had another pre-occupation as well,—to instruct himself, which he called self-deliverance. He had taught himself to read and write; and all that he knew he had learned alone. Feuilly had a generous heart, and hugged the whole world. This orphan had adopted the nations; and as he had no mother, he meditated on his country. He wished that there might not be a man in the world who had no country, and he brooded over what we now call the “idea of nationalities” with the profound divination of the man of the people. He studied history expressly that he might be indignant with full knowledge of the facts; and in this youthful assembly of Utopians, who were specially interested about France, he represented the foreign element. His specialty was Greece, Poland, Roumania, Hungary, and Italy; he pronounced these names incessantly, in season and out of season, with the tenacity of right. The violations committed by Turkey on Greece and Thessaly, by Russia on Warsaw, and Austria on Venice, exasperated him. Above all things, the great highway robbery of 1772 aroused him. There can be no more sovereign eloquence than truth fired with rage; and he was eloquent with that eloquence. He never left off talking about the infamous date, 1772, the noble and valiant people suppressed by treachery, that crime committed by three accomplices, and that monstrous ambush,—the prototype and pattern of all those frightful suppressions of states, which have since struck many noble nations, and have, so to speak, erased their names from the baptismal register. All the social crimes of the present day emanate from the division of Poland, and it is a theorem to which all our political crimes are corollaries. There is not a despot or a traitor for a century past who has not revised, confirmed, countersigned, and copied, *ne varietur*, the partition of Poland. When we consult the list of modern treasons, this appears the first. The Congress of Vienna consulted this crime ere it consummated its own; 1772 sounded the view-halloo, and 1815 witnessed the death of the

stag. Such was Feuilly's usual text. This poor workman had made himself the guardian of Justice, and she rewarded him by making him great. In truth, there is an eternity in right. Warsaw can no more be Tartar than Venice Teuton. Kings lose their time and their honour in the attempt to make them so. Sooner or later the submerged country rises to the surface and re-appears. Greece becomes Greece once more, and Italy, Italy. The protest of right against the deed, persists forever. There is no law of prescription for the robbery of a nation. Such high acts of pilfering have no future. The mark cannot be taken out of a nation like a handkerchief.

Courfeyrac had a father who was known as M. de Courfeyrac. One of the incorrect ideas of the middle classes under the Restoration in the matter of the aristocracy and the nobility was a belief in the particle. The particle, as we know, has no meaning; but the middle classes of the time of the *Minerve* esteemed this poor *de* so highly that they thought themselves bound to abdicate it. M. de Chauvelin called himself M. Chauvelin; M. de Caumartin, M. Caumartin; M. de Constant de Rebecque, Benjamin Constant, and M. de Lafayette, M. Lafayette. Courfeyrac was unwilling to remain behindhand, and called himself plain Courfeyrac.

As concerns this gentleman, we might almost stop here, and content ourselves with saying as regards the rest, "For Courfeyrac, see Tholomyès." Courfeyrac, in fact, had that vigour of youth which might be called a mental *beauté du diable*. Later on, this vanishes like the prettiness of the kitten; and all this grace ends with the tradesman on two legs, and the tom-cat on four paws.

This sort of wit is transmitted from generation to generation of the successive levies of youth, who pass through the schools. They pass it from hand to hand, *quasi cursores*, nearly always the same; so that as we have said, any one who had listened to Courfeyrac in 1828, might have fancied he was hearing Tholomyès in 1817. Only Courfeyrac was an honest fellow, and beneath an apparent outward likeness the difference between Tholomyès and himself was great. The

latent man who existed within the two was very different in the first from what it was in the second. In Tholomyès there was an attorney, and in Courfeyrac a paladin.

Enjolras was the chief, Combeferre the guide, and Courfeyrac the centre. The others gave more light, but he produced more heat; he had all the qualities of a centre,—roundness and radiance.

Bahorel had been mixed up in the bloody tumult of June, 1822, on the occasion of the burial of young Lallemand.

Bahorel was a good-natured fellow who kept bad company, brave, a spendthrift, prodigal to the verge of generosity, a chatterbox to the verge of eloquence, bold to the verge of effrontery, and the very best clay imaginable for the devil's moulding. He displayed daring waistcoats and scarlet opinions. He was turbulent on a grand scale,—that is to say, he liked nothing so much as a quarrel unless it were a riot, and nothing so much as a riot except a revolution. He was ever ready to break a pane of glass, to tear up the paving-stones, and to demolish a government, just to see the effect; he was a student in his eleventh year. He sniffed at the law, but did not practise it; and he had taken as his motto, "Never a lawyer," and as his coat-of-arms a night-stand surmounted by a square cap. Whenever he passed the law school, which rarely happened, he buttoned up his frock-coat,—the overcoat had not yet been invented,—and took hygienic precautions. He said of the school gate-way, "What a fine old man!" and of the dean, M. Devincourt, "What a monument!" He found in his lectures a subject for coarse songs, and in his professors an occasion for caricature. He spent a very considerable allowance, something like three thousand francs, in idleness.

His parents were peasants in whom he had inculcated a respect for their son.

He used to say of them, "They are peasants, and not trades-people; that is why they are so intelligent."

Bahorel, a man of caprice, frequented various cafés; the others had habits, he had none. He sauntered, he lounged; if *errare* is human, to saunter is Parisian. In reality, he had

a penetrating mind, and was more of a thinker than people supposed.

He served as the connecting link between the Friends of the A. B. C. and other groups still unorganized, but destined to take form at a later date.

In this assembly of young men there was one bald-headed member.

The Marquis d'Avaray, whom Louis XVIII. made a duke because he helped him into a cab on the day when he emigrated, used to tell how, when the king landed in 1814 at Calais, upon his return to France, a man handed him a petition.

"What do you want?" said the king.

"A postmastership, sire."

"What is your name?"

"L'Aigle."

The king frowned, but looked at the signature of the petition, and read the name thus written, Lesgle. This anything but Bonapartist orthography, touched the king, and he smiled. "Sire," the man with the petition went on, "my ancestor was a whipper-in named Lesgueules, and my name came from that. I called myself Lesgueules, by contraction Lesgle, and by corruption L'Aigle." This remark made the king smile still more; and later on he gave the man the post-office at Meaux, purposely or by accident.

The bald member of the group was a son of this Lesgle or Lègle, and signed himself Lègle (of Meaux). His comrades, to shorten this, called him Bossuet, who, as everybody knows, was christened the Eagle of Meaux.

Bossuet was a merry fellow, who was always unlucky, and his specialty was to succeed in nothing. *Per contra*, he laughed at everything. At the age of five-and-twenty he was bald; his father left him a house and a field, but the son soon lost both in a swindling speculation, and nothing was left him. He had learning and sense, but they led to nothing; he failed in everything, and everything deceived him. Whatever he built up, tumbled down on top of him. If he chopped wood,

he cut his fingers; and if he had a mistress, he speedily discovered that he had also a friend. Some misfortune happened to him every moment, and hence his joviality. He used to say, "I live under a roof of falling tiles." Not easily astonished, for accident was always foreseen by him, he accepted ill luck serenely, and smiled at the pin-pricks of destiny like a man who is listening to a good joke. He was poor, but his store of good-nature was inexhaustible; he speedily reached his last penny, but never his last laugh. When adversity entered his door, he bowed to his old acquaintance cordially; he tickled catastrophe in the ribs, and was on familiar terms with fatality. "How are you, ill luck?" said he.

These persecutions of fate had rendered him inventive, and he was full of resources. He had no money, but contrived to make a "frenzied outlay" whenever he thought proper. One night he went so far as to devour a hundred francs in a supper with a wench, which inspired him in the midst of the orgy with the memorable remark, "*Fille de cinq Louis*,¹ pull off my boots."

Bossuet was advancing slowly to the legal profession, and studied law much after the fashion of Bahorel. Bossuet had but little domicile,—sometimes none at all. He lived first with one and then with another, but most frequently with Joly.

Joly was a student of medicine, two years younger than Bossuet.

Joly was the young *malade imaginaire*. What he had gained by his medical studies was to be more of a patient than a doctor, for at the age of twenty-three he fancied himself a valetudinarian, and spent his life in looking at his tongue in a mirror. He declared that a man becomes magnetic like a needle, and he placed his bed with the head to the south and the foot to the north, so that at night the circulation of his blood might not be impeded by the great magnetic current of the globe. In storms he felt his pulse, but for all that was the

¹ *Fille de Saint Louis*: daughter of Saint Louis. A pun based on the similar sound of Saint Louis and cinq louis, and five louis jade. Five louis are equivalent to one hundred francs.

gayest of all. All these incoherences — youth, mania, dyspepsia, and fun — harmonized, and the result was an eccentric and agreeable being, whom his comrades, lavish of liquid consonants, called “Jol-l-ly.”

Joly had a way of touching his nose with the end of his cane, which is the sign of a sagacious mind.

All these young men who differed so greatly, and of whom, after all, we must speak seriously, had the same religion,—Progress.

They all were the direct sons of the French Revolution, and the lightest-minded among them became serious when he uttered the date, '89. Their fathers in the flesh were, or had been, Catholics, royalists, or doctrinarians; but that was of little consequence. This confusion, anterior to themselves, who were young, did not concern them; the pure blood of principles flowed in their veins. They attached themselves, without any intermediate tinge, to incorruptible right and absolute duty.

Affiliated and initiated, they sketched out the ideal in their subterranean meetings.

Among all these impassioned hearts and convinced minds there was one sceptic; how did he get there? through juxtaposition. The name of this sceptic was Grantaire, and he usually wrote it after the manner of a charade,—R.¹ Grantaire was a man who carefully avoided believing in anything; he was, however, the one of these students who had learned the most during his Parisian residence. He knew that the best coffee was to be found at Lemblier's and the best billiard-table at the Café Voltaire; that excellent cakes and agreeable girls could be found at the Hermitage on the Boulevard du Maine, spatch-cocks at Mother Saquet's, excellent stewed ells at the Barrière de la Cunette, and a peculiar white wine at the Barrière du Combat. He knew the best place for everything; also boxing and wrestling, and certain dances, and became a fine fencer. Besides all this, he was a mighty drinker. He was abominably ugly, and Irma Boissy, the prettiest boot-

¹ Grantaire = Grand R.

binder of that day, in her indignation at his ugliness, passed the verdict, "Grantaire is impossible." But Grantaire's fatuity was not disconcerted by this. He gazed tenderly and fixedly at every woman, and assumed an expression of, "If I only liked!" and he tried to make his companions believe that he was in general request with the sex.

All such words as rights of the people, rights of man, the social contract, the French Revolution, the republic, democracy, humanity, civilization, progress, had as good as no meaning to Grantaire. He smiled at them. Scepticism, that caries of the intellect, had not left him a single whole idea. He lived on irony, and his motto was, "There is only one thing certain,—my full glass." He ridiculed every act of devotion in every party,—the brother as much as the father, young Robespierre as heartily as Loizerolles. "They made great progress by dying," he would exclaim; and he would say of the crucifix: "There is a gallows which was a success." Idler, gambler, libertine, and often intoxicated, he annoyed these young dreamers by incessantly singing, "*J'aime les filles et j'aime le bon vin*" to the tune of "Long live Henri IV."

This sceptic, however, had one fanaticism; it was neither an idea, a dogma, an art, nor a science; it was a man,—Enjolras. Grantaire admired, loved, and revered Enjolras. To whom did this anarchical doubter cling in this phalanx of absolute minds? To the most absolute. How did Enjolras subjugate him? By his ideas? No, but by his character. This is a phenomena frequently observed. A sceptic who clings to a believer is as simple as the law of complementary colours. What we do not possess, attracts us; no one loves daylight like the blind man; the dwarf adores the drum-major; and the frog has its eyes constantly fixed on heaven. Why? To watch the bird in its flight. Grantaire, in whom doubt grovelled, liked to see faith soar in Enjolras. He felt the want of him without clearly understanding it, or even dreaming of explaining the fact to himself. That chaste, healthy, firm, upright, harsh, and candid nature charmed him, and he in-

instinctively admired his opposite. His soft, yielding, dislocated, sickly, and shapeless ideas attached themselves to Enjolras as to a spinal column, and his moral backbone found a support in that firmness. Grantaire, by the side of Enjolras, became somebody again. He was, moreover, himself composed of two apparently irreconcilable elements,—he was ironical and cordial. His mind could do without belief, but his heart could not do without friendship. This is a profound contradiction, for an affection is a conviction; but his nature was such. Some men are apparently born to be the reverse of the coin, the obverse, the inverse. Their names are Pollux, Patroclus, Nisus, Eudamidas, Hephestion, and Pechmeja. They live only on condition that they are backed by another man; their name is a sequel, and is never written except preceded by the conjunction *and*; their existence is not their own, but is the other side of a destiny which is not theirs. Grantaire was one of these men. He was the other side of Enjolras.

We might almost say that affinities begin with the letters of the alphabet. O and P are inseparable in the series. You may, as you please, say O and P, or Orestes and Pylades.

Grantaire, a true satellite of Enjolras, dwelt in this circle of young men. he lived there; he enjoyed himself nowhere else; and he followed them everywhere. His delight was to see their shadows come and go through the fumes of wine. He was tolerated for his pleasant humour.

Enjolras, the believer, disdained this sceptic; and himself a sober man, he loathed this drunkard, but he granted him a little haughty pity. Grantaire was an unaccepted Pylades; constantly repulsed by Enjolras, harshly rejected, and yet ever returning to the charge, he used to say of Enjolras, "What a splendid statue!"

CHAPTER II

A FUNERAL ORATION BY BOSSUET

ON a certain afternoon, which, as we shall see, had some coincidence with the events recorded above, Laigle de Meaux leaned sensuously against the door-post of the Café Musain. He looked like a caryatid out for a holiday, and having nothing to carry but his reverie. He stared at the Place St. Michel. To lean against something is a mode of lying down upright which is not disliked by dreamers. Laigle de Meaux was thinking, without melancholy, of a slight misadventure which had befallen him, two days before, at the law school, and which modified his personal plans for the future,—plans which were somewhat indistinct, however.

Reverie does not prevent a cab from passing, or a dreamer from noting the cab. Laigle, whose eyes were absently wandering, saw through his somnambulism a two-wheeled vehicle moving across the Place St. Michel at a foot-pace and apparently undecided. What did this cab want? Why was it going so slowly? Laigle looked at it, and saw a young man seated beside the driver, and in front of the young man, a big carpet-bag. The bag displayed to passers-by this name, written in large black letters on a card sewed to the cloth, MARIUS PONTMERCY.

This name made Laigle change his attitude. He drew himself up, and shouted to the young man in the cab:

“M. Marius Pontmercy!”

The cab stopped on being thus hailed; and the young man, who also appeared to be thinking deeply, raised his eyes.

“Hullo!” he said.

“Are you M. Pontmercy?”

“Yes.”

“I was looking for you,” continued Laigle de Meaux.

“How so?” asked Marius, for it ~~was~~ really he; he had

just left his grandfather's, and had before him a face which he saw for the first time. "I do not know you."

"And I don't know you, either."

Marius fancied that he had met with a practical joker; and as he was not in the best of tempers, he frowned. Laigle went on imperturbably:—

"You were not at lecture the day before yesterday."

"Very possibly."

"It is certain."

"Are you a student?" asked Marius.

"Yes, sir, like yourself. The day before yesterday I entered the law school by chance; as you know, a man has an idea like that sometimes. The professor was calling the roll; and you know how ridiculous they are just now. If the third call remains unanswered, your name is erased from the list, and sixty francs are gone."

Marius began to listen, and Laigle continued:—

"Blondeau was calling the roll. You know Blondeau has a pointed and most malicious nose, and scents out the absent with delight. He craftily began with the letter P; and I did not listen, because I was not compromised by that letter. The roll-call went on capitally; there was no erasure, and the whole world was present. Blondeau was sad; and I said to myself aside, 'Blondeau, my love, you will not perform the slightest execution to-day.' All at once Blondeau calls out, 'Marius Pontmercy!' No one answered; and so Blondeau, full of hope, repeats, in a louder voice, 'Marius Pontmercy!' and takes up his pen. I have bowels of compassion, sir, and said to myself hurriedly: 'Here's a good fellow who will be scratched off the list. Attention! he is not a proper student, — a student who studies, a reading man, a pedantic sap, strong in science, literature, theology, and philosophy; one of your dullards dressed to kill; a pin by profession. No; he is an honourable idler, who lounges about, enjoys the country, cultivates the grisette, pays his court to the ladies, and is perhaps with my mistress at this moment. I must save him; death to Blondeau!' At this moment Blondeau dipped his

pen, black with erasures, into the ink, cast his yellow eyes around the room, and repeated, for the third time, 'Marius Pontmercy!' I answered, 'Here!' and so your name was not erased."

"Sir!" exclaimed Marius.

"And mine was," added Laigle de Meaux.

"I do not understand you," said Marius.

Laigle continued:—

"And yet it was very simple. I was near the desk to answer, and near the door to escape. The professor looked at me with a certain intensity. Suddenly Blondeau—who must be the crafty nose mentioned by Boileau—skipped to the letter L, which is my letter; for I come from Meaux, and my name is L'Esgle."

"L'Aigle!" Marius interrupted. "What a glorious name!"

"Sir, Blondeau came to that glorious name, and exclaimed, 'L'Aigle!' I answer, 'Here!' Then Blondeau looks at me with the gentleness of a tiger, smiles, and says, 'If you are Pontmercy, you are not Laigle,'—a phrase which appears offensive to you, but which was only painful to me. So saying, he scratched me off the list."

Marius exclaimed:—

"I am really mortified, sir —"

"First," interrupted Laigle, "I ask leave to embalm Blondeau in a few phrases of heart-felt praise. I will suppose him dead, and there will not be much to alter in his thinness, paleness, coldness, stiffness, and smell; and I say, *Erudimini qui judicatis terram*. Here lies Blondeau,—Blondeau the Nose (*Blondeau Nasica*), the ox of discipline (*bos disciplinæ*), the mastiff of duty, the angel of the roll-call, who was upright, square, exact, rigid, honest, and hideous. God erased him as he erased me."

Marius continued, "I am most grieved —"

"Young man," said Laigle, "let this serve you as a lesson; in future, be punctual —"

"I beg a thousand pardons,"

"—and do not run the risk of getting your neighbour erased."

"I am in despair —"

Laigle burst into a laugh.

"And I am enchanted. I was on the verge of becoming a lawyer, and this erasure saves me. I renounce the triumphs of the bar. I shall not defend the orphan or attack the widow. No more toga; no more terms. I am expelled; and I am indebted to you for it, M. Pontmercy. I intend to pay you a solemn visit of thanks. Where do you live?"

"In this cab," said Marius.

"A sign of opulence," Laigle remarked calmly. "I congratulate you; for you have apartments at nine thousand francs a year."

At this moment Courfeyrac came out of the café.

Marius smiled sadly.

"I have been in this lodging for two hours, and am eager to leave it, but I do not know where to go."

"Come home with me," said Courfeyrac.

"I have the prior right," observed Laigle; "but, then, I have no home."

"Hold your tongue, Bossuet!" remarked Courfeyrac.

"Bossuet!" said Marius; "why, you told me your name was Laigle."

"Of Meaux," answered Laigle; "by metaphor, Bossuet."

Courfeyrac got into the cab.

"Hotel de la Porte St. Jacques, driver," said he.

That same evening Marius was installed in a room in that house, next door to Courfeyrac.

CHAPTER III

MARIUS IS ASTONISHED

IN a few days, Marius was Courfeyrac's friend; for youth is the season of prompt welding and rapid cicatrization. Marius breathed freely in Courfeyrac's company,—a great novelty for him. Courfeyrac asked him no questions, and did not even think of doing so; for at that age faces tell everything at once, and words are superfluous. There are some young men of whose countenances you may say that they gossip,—you look at them and know them. One morning, however, Courfeyrac suddenly asked him:—

“By the way, have you any political opinions?”

“Eh! what?” said Marius, almost offended by the question.

“What are you?”

“Bonapartist — democrat.”

“The gray colour of a quiet mouse,” remarked Courfeyrac.

Next day he led Marius to the Café Musain, and whispered in his ear with a smile, “I must admit you to the Revolution,” and he took him to the room of the Friends of the A. B. C. He introduced him to his companions, saying in a low voice, “a pupil,” which Marius did not at all comprehend.

Marius had fallen into a wasp's-nest of wits; but though he was silent and grave, he was not the less winged and armed.

Marius, hitherto solitary, and given to soliloquy and to asides, through habit and taste, was somewhat startled by the swarm of young men around him. All these various initiatives solicited him at once, and pulled him different ways. The tumultuous movement of all these minds at liberty and at work set his ideas in a whirl. Sometimes, in his confusion, they flew so far from him that he had difficulty in finding them again. He heard philosophy, literature, art, history, and religion spoken of in an unexpected way; he caught a glimpse

of strange aspects; and as he did not place them in proper perspective, he was not sure that he was not gazing at chaos. On giving up his grandfather's opinions for those of his father, he believed himself settled; but he now suspected, anxiously, and not daring to confess it to himself, that it was not so. The angle in which he viewed everything was beginning to be displaced afresh. A certain oscillation shook all the horizons of his brain. It was a strange internal upsetting, and it almost made him ill.

It seemed as if there were no "sacred things" for these young men. Marius heard singular remarks about all sorts of matters which were offensive to his still timid mind.

A play-bill came under notice, adorned with the title of an old stock tragedy of the so-called classical school. "Down with the tragedy dear to the tradesman!" shouted Bahorel; and Marius heard Combeferre reply:

"You are wrong, Bahorel. The cits love tragedy, and they must be left at peace upon that point. Periwigged tragedy has a reason for its existence; and I am not one of those who, for love of Æschylus, contest its right to exist. There are rough outlines in Nature, and ready-made parodies in creation,—a beak which is no beak, wings which are no wings, gills which are no gills, feet which are no feet, a dolorous cry which inclines you to laugh; there you have the duck. Now, since poultry exists by the side of the bird, I do not see why classic tragedy should not exist face to face with ancient tragedy."

Or else Marius chanced to pass through the Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau between Enjolras and Courfeyrac, and the latter seized his arm.

"Pay attention! This is the Rue Plâtrière, now called Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau, on account of a singular family that lived here sixty years back. They were Jean Jacques and Thérèse. From time to time, little creatures were born; Thérèse brought them into the world, and Jean Jacques brought them to the Foundling Hospital."

And Enjolras reproved Courfeyrac.

"Silence before Jean Jacques! I admire that man. I grant that he abandoned his children, but he adopted the people."

Not one of these young men ever uttered the words, *the Emperor*. Jean Prouvaire alone sometimes said "Napoleon;" all the rest said "Bonaparte." Enjolras pronounced it Buonaparte.

Marius was vaguely astonished. *Initium sapientiæ.*

CHAPTER IV

THE BACK ROOM OF THE CAFÉ MUSAIN

ONE of the conversations among the young men, at which Marius was present, and in which he joined now and then, was a thorough shock to his mind.

It came off in the back room of the Café Musain, and nearly all the Friends of the A. B. C. were collected on that occasion. The lamp was solemnly lighted. They talked about one thing and another, without passion and with noise, and with the exception of Enjolras and Marius, who were silent, all harangued somewhat at haphazard. Conversations between comrades sometimes are subject to these peaceable tumults. It was a game and a skirmish as much as a conversation. Words were tossed and caught up, and students chattered in all four corners.

No woman was admitted to this back room, excepting Louison, the dish-washer, who passed through from time to time to go from the wash-room to the "laboratory."

Grantaire, who was quite intoxicated, was deafening the corner he had seized upon, shouting things, reasonable and unreasonable, at the top of his voice:—

"I am thirsty. Mortals, I am dreaming that the tun of Heidelberg has a fit of apoplexy, and that I am one of the

dozen leeches applied to it. I want to drink, for I desire to forget life. Life is a hideous invention of somebody with whom I am unacquainted. It lasts no time at all, and is worth nothing; and a man breaks his neck to live. Life is a stage-setting in which there are few practicable entrances; and happiness is an old side-scene, painted on one side only. Ecclesiastes says, 'All is vanity;' and I agree with that worthy gentleman, who possibly never existed. Zero, not liking to go stark naked, clothed himself in vanity. O vanity! The dressing up of everything in big words! A kitchen is a laboratory, a dancer a professor, a mountebank a gymnast, a boxer a pugilist, an apothecary a chemist, a barber an artist, a bricklayer an architect, a jockey a sportsman, and a wood-louse a pterygibranch. Vanity has a right side and a wrong side; the right side is stupid,—it is the negro with his glass beads; the wrong side is foolish,—it is the philosopher in his rags. I weep over the one and laugh at the other. What are called honours and dignities, and even genuine honour and dignity, are generally made of pinchbeck. Kings play with human pride. Caligula made a horse a consul, and Charles II. knighted a sirloin of beef. Drape yourselves, therefore, between Consul Incitatus and Sir Roastbeef. As to the intrinsic value of people, it is not one bit more respectable; just listen to the panegyric which one neighbour makes of another. White against white is ferocious. If the lily could talk, how it would run down the dove; and a bigoted woman talking of a pious woman is more venomous than the asp and the whip-snake. It is a pity that I am an ignoramus, for I would quote a multitude of things; but I know nothing. But for all that, I have always had sense. When I was a pupil of Gros, instead of daubing poor pictures, I spent my time in priggish apples. So much for myself; but you others are no better, and I have no use for your perfections, excellences, and qualities. Every good quality has its corresponding defect. Economy is akin to avarice; generosity is very nearly related to extravagance, and courage trenches on braggadocio. When you call a man very pious, you mean that he is a bigot;

and there are just as many vices in virtue as there are holes in the mantle of Diogenes. Which do you admire,— the slain or the slayer, Cæsar or Brutus? People generally vote for the slayer. Long live Brutus! he was a murderer. Such is virtue; it may be virtue, but it is also madness. There are some queer spots on these great men; the Brutus who killed Cæsar was in love with the statue of a little boy. This statue was made by the Greek sculptor Strongylion who also produced that figure of an Amazon called Finelegs, Eucnemys, which Nero carried about with him on his travels. This Strongylion left but two statues, which brought Brutus and Nero into harmony; Brutus was in love with one, and Nero with the other. History is but one long repetition, and one century is the plagiarist of another. The battle of Marengo is a copy of the battle of Pydna; the Tolbiac of Clovis and the Austerlitz of Napoleon are as much alike as two drops of blood. I set but little value on victory; nothing is so stupid as to conquer; true glory lies in convincing. But try to prove anything! You are satisfied with success,— what mediocrity! and with conquering, what a wretched trifle! Alas! vanity and cowardice are everywhere. Everything obeys success, even grammar. ‘*Si volet usus,*’ as Horace says. Hence I despise the whole human race. Suppose we descend from universals to particulars? Would you wish me to begin by admiring the people? What people, if you please? Greece? The Athenians, those Parisians of former time, killed Phocion, as you might say Coligny, and fawned on tyrants to such a degree that Anacephorus said of Pisistratus, ‘his urine attracts the bees.’ The most considerable man in Greece for fifty years was the grammarian Philetas, who was so short and small that he was obliged to put lead in his shoes to keep the wind from blowing him way. On the great square in Corinth stood a statue carved by Silanion, and catalogued by Pliny; it represented Episthatus. What did Episthatus do? He invented the cross-buttock. There you have a summary of Greece and glory, and now let us pass to others. Shall I admire England? Shall I admire France? France, why?

On account of Paris? I have just told you my opinion of Athens. England, why? On account of London? I hate Carthage. And, besides, London, the metropolis of luxury, is the headquarters of misery. In Charing Cross parish alone, one hundred persons die annually of starvation. Such is Albion; and I will add, as crowning point, that I have seen an English woman dancing in a wreath of roses and blue spectacles. So, a fig for England. If I do not admire John Bull, shall I admire Brother Jonathan with his peculiar institution? Take away 'Time is money,' and what is left of England? Take away 'Cotton is king,' and what is left of America? Germany is lymph and Italy bile. Shall we go into ecstasies over Russia? Voltaire admired that country, and he also admired China. I allow that Russia has its beauties,—among others a powerful despotism; but I pity the despots, for they have delicate health. An Alexis decapitated, a Peter stabbed, a Paul strangled, another Paul flattened out with boot-heels, sundry Ivans butchered, several Nicholases and Basils poisoned,—all this proves that the palace of the Emperors of Russia is in a flagrantly unhealthy condition. All civilized nations offer to the admiration of the thinker one detail,—war. Now, war, civilized war, exhausts and sums up all forms of banditism, from the brigandage of *trabuceros* in the gorges of Mont Jaxa, down to the forays of Comanche Indians in the Doubtful Pass. 'Stuff!' you will say; 'Europe is better than Asia, after all.' I admit that Asia is absurd; but I do not exactly see why you should laugh at the Grand Lama, you great western nations, who have blended with your fashions and elegances all the complicated filth of majesty, from the dirty chemise of Queen Isabella down to the chamber-chair of the daupin. At Brussels the most beer is consumed, at Stockholm the most brandy, at Madrid the most chocolate, at Amsterdam the most gin, at London the most wine, at Constantinople the most coffee, and at Paris the most absinthe,—these are all useful notions. Paris, after all, bears away the bell, for in that city the very rag-pickers are sybarites; and Diogenes would as soon have been a rag-picker on the Place

Maubert as a philosopher at the Piræus. Learn this fact also: the wine-shops of the rag-pickers are called 'bibines,' and the most celebrated are the *Casserole* and the *Abattoir*. O pot-houses, sample-rooms, bar-rooms, grog-shops, dance-halls, gin-mills, dives, saloons, boozing-kens, wine-shops of the rag-pickers, caravansaries for caliphs, I call you to witness. I am a voluptuary. I dine at Richard's for forty sous, and I must have Persian carpets in which to roll the naked Cleopatra. Where is Cleopatra? Ah, it is you, Louison? Good-evening."

Thus poured forth Grantaire, more than drunk, seizing the dish-washer as she passed his corner in the backroom of the Café Musain.

Bossuet, stretching his hand toward him, strove to silence him; but Grantaire broke out afresh.

"Eagle of Meaux, down with your paws. You produce no effect upon me with your gesture of Hippocrates refusing the *bric-à-brac* of Artaxerxes. You need not try to sooth me. Moreover, I am melancholy. What would you have me say? Man is bad; man is a deformity. The butterfly is a success, but man is a failure. God made a mistake with that animal.

"A crowd is a choice of ugliness; the first-comer is a scoundrel, and woman rhymes with human. Yes, I have the spleen, complicated with melancholy, homesickness, and a dash of hypochondria; and I am put out, and I rage, and I yawn, and I am bored, and I am tired to death, and I am horribly dull. To the Devil with God!"

"Silence, big R," again remarked Bossuet, who was discussing a legal point with some chums, and was plunged waist-deep in a phrase of judicial slang, of which the following is the end:—

"For my part, although I am scarce an authority, and at the most, an amateur lawyer, I assert this, that, according to the terms of the customs of Normandy, upon Michaelmas Day, and for every year, an equivalent must be paid to the lord of the manor, by all and singular, both by proprietors and by

tenants for life, and that for every lease, copyhold, allodium, mortgage —”

“Echo, plaintive nymph!”

hummed Grantaire.

Close to Grantaire, at an almost silent table, a quire of paper, an inkstand, and a pen between two glasses of brandy announced that a farce was being sketched out.

This great affair was discussed in a low voice, and the heads of the two workers almost touched.

“Let us begin with the names; for when you have the names you have the plot.”

“That is true; dictate, and I will write.”

“Monsieur Dorimon?”

“A man of means?”

“Of course. His daughter Celestine.”

“—tine. Who next?”

“Colonel Sainval.”

“Sainval is worn out. I should say Valsin.”

Besides these theatrical aspirants, another group, which also took advantage of the noise to talk low, was discussing a duel.

An old fellow of thirty was advising a young man of eighteen, and explaining with what sort of adversary he had to deal.

“Hang it! You will have to be careful, for he is a splendid swordsman. He can attack, makes no useless feints, has a strong wrist, brilliancy, and mathematical parries. And then he is left-handed.”

In the corner opposite Grantaire, Joly and Bahorel were playing dominos, and talking of love.

“You are in luck,” said Joly; “you have a mistress who is always laughing.”

“There she makes a mistake,” said Bahorel. “A man’s mistress does wrong to laugh, for it encourages him to deceive her; for seeing her gay saves you from remorse. If you see her sad, you have scruples of conscience.”

“Ungrateful man! A woman who laughs is so nice. And you never quarrel.”

“That results from the treaty we made. On forming our little Holy Alliance, we assigned ourselves each a frontier, which we never cross. Hence comes peace.”

“Peace is happiness digesting.”

“And you, Jol-l-l-ly, how does your quarrel stand with Mamselle,—you know whom I mean?”

“Oh, she still sulks with cruel patience.”

“And yet you are a lover of most touching thinness.”

“Alas!”

“In your place, I would leave her.”

“It’s easy to say that.”

“And to do. Is not her name Musichetta?”

“Yes. Ah, my dear Bahorel, she is a superb girl, very literary, with little hands and feet, dresses with taste, is white and dimpled, and has eyes like a gypsy fortune-teller. I am wild about her.”

“Then you must please her. Dress well, buy fashionable trousers; that will help.”

“For how much?” cried Grantaire.

The third corner was given over to a poetical discussion. Pagan Mythology was quarrelling with Christian Mythology. The question was Olympus, whose part Jean Prouvaire took out of sheer romance.

Jean Prouvaire was timid only when in repose. Once excited, he broke out; a sort of gayety accentuated his enthusiasm, and he was both laughing and lyric.

“Let us not insult the gods,” said he, “for perhaps they have not all departed. Jupiter does not impress me as dead. The gods are dreams, you say. Well, even in Nature, such as it is at the present day, and after the flight of these dreams, we still find all the old Pagan myths. A mountain with the profile of a citadel, like the Vignemale, for instance, is still to me the headdress of Cybele. It has not yet been proved to me that Pan does not come at night to breath into the hollow trunks of willows, stopping their holes with his

fingers in turn ; and I have ever believed that Io had some connection with the cascade of Pissevache."

In the last corner, politics were being discussed, and the newly granted Charter was pulled to pieces. Combeferre supported it feebly, while Courfeyrac attacked it energetically. On the table lay an unlucky copy of the famous Touquet Charter. Courfeyrac seized it, and brandished it, mixing with his arguments the rustling of this sheet of paper.

"In the first place, I'll have no kings. If it were only from an economic point of view, I'll have none; for a king is a parasite, and there are no gratis monarchs. Listen to this: kings are an expensive luxury. On the death of Francis I. the public debt of France was thirty thousand livres; on the death of Louis XIV. it was two milliards six hundred millions, at twenty-eight livres the mark, which in 1740 was equivalent, according to Desmarests, to four milliards five hundred millions, and at the present day would be equal to twelve milliards. In the second place, and no offence to Combeferre, a conceded charter is a bad expedient of civilization. To save the transition, soften the passage, deaden the shock, make the nation pass insensibly from monarchy to democracy by the practice of constitutional fictions, what detestable reasons are these. No, no; let us never enlighten the people with false light. Principles pine and grow pale in your constitutional cellar. No illegitimacy, no compromise, no concession from the king to the people! In all such concessions there is an article XIV. Besides, the hand that gives is the claw that takes back again. I distinctly refuse your charter. A charter is a mask, and a lie lurks behind it. A people that accepts a charter abdicates; and right is only right when entire. No charter, then, I say."

It was winter. A couple of logs were crackling on the hearth. This was tempting, and Courfeyrac did not resist. He crumpled up the poor Touquet Charter and threw it in the fire; the paper blazed, and Combeferre philosophically watched the masterpiece of Louis XVIII. burn, contenting himself with saying:—

“The charter metamorphosed into flame.”

And sarcasms, sallies, jests, that French thing which is called *entrain*, that English thing which is called humour, good taste and bad, sound reasons and unsound, all the sky rockets of dialogue, ascending together and crossing each other in all parts of the room, produced a sort of merry bombardment above their heads.

CHAPTER V

ENLARGEMENT OF THE HORIZON

THE collision of young minds has this admirable thing about it, that the spark can never be foreseen or the lightning flash divined. What will shoot forth presently? No one knows. The burst of laughter starts from emotion. In a comic moment the serious makes its entrance.

The impulse is given by some chance word; a pun opens the way to the unexpected. The dialogue has sharp turns, when the view suddenly changes. Hazard is the scene-shifter in each conversation. A stern thought, which strangely issued from a clash of words, suddenly flashed through the medley of words in which Grantaire, Bahorel, Prouvaire, Bossuet, Combeferre, and Courfeyrac were blindly slashing and fencing.

How is that a phrase suddenly springs up in conversation and underlines itself at once in the attention of those who hear it? As we have just said, no one knows. In the midst of the general confusion, Bossuet concluded some remark to Combeferre with the date:—

“June 18, 1815, Waterloo.”

At this name of Waterloo, Marius, who was leaning over a glass of water on a table, removed his hand from under his chin, and looked intently at the company.

“Pardieu!” Courfeyrac exclaimed (*parbleu* at this period

was beginning to go out of fashion), "that number eighteen is strange, and strikes me. It is Bonaparte's fatal number. Place Louis before and Brumaire behind, and you have the man's whole destiny, with this expressive peculiarity, that the end treads upon the heels of the beginning."

Enjolras, who had hitherto been dumb, now broke the silence, and said:—

"Courfeyrac, you mean the expiation upon the crime."

This word *crime* exceeded the measure which Marius, who was already greatly agitated by this sudden reference to Waterloo, could accept.

He rose, walked slowly to the map of France hanging on the wall, at the bottom of which was an island in a separate compartment; he placed his finger on this compartment and said:—

"Corsica, a small island, which made France very great."

This was like a breath of icy air; all were silent, for they felt that something was about to happen.

Bahorel, replying to Bossuet, was assuming a victorious attitude to which he was addicted, but gave it up in order to listen.

Enjolras, whose blue eye was fixed on no one, and who seemed to be examining space, answered, without looking at Marius:—

"France requires no Corsica to be great. France is great because she is France. *Quia nominor leo.*"

Marius felt no desire to retreat; he turned to Enjolras, and his voice had a strange vibration, produced by his internal emotion.

"Heaven forbid that I should detract from France; but it is not detracting from her to combine Napoleon with her. Come, let us talk; I am a new-comer among you, but I confess that you astonish me. Where are we? Who are we? Who are you? Who am I? Let us come to an understanding about the Emperor. I hear you call him Buonaparte, laying a stress on the *u*, like the royalists; but I must tell

you that my grandfather does better still, for he says ‘Buona-parté.’ I thought you were young men, but where is your enthusiasm, and what do you do with it? Whom do you admire, if not the Emperor? and what more do you want? If you will have none of that great man, what great men will you have? He had everything? He was complete. In his brain was the sum of human faculties. He made codes like Justinian, and dictated like Cæsar; his conversation blended the lightnings of Pascal with the thunders of Tacitus; he made history and wrote it, and his bulletins are Iliads; he combined the figures of Newton with the metaphor of Mahomet. He left behind him in the East, words great as the Pyramids; at Tilsit he taught majesty to Emperors; in the Academy of Sciences he answered Laplace; in the Council of State he held his own against Merlin,—he gave a soul to the geometry of the one and to the sophistry of the other, for he was legist with the lawyers, sidereal with the astronomers. Like Cromwell, blowing out one of two candles, he went to the Temple to bargain for a certain tassel. He saw everything, knew everything; but that did not prevent him from laughing heartily beside the cradle of his new-born son. And all at once startled Europe listened; armies were on the march, parks of artillery rolled along, bridges of boats were thrown across rivers, clouds of cavalry galloped in the hurricane, and shouts, bugles, and the crash of thrones were heard on every hand. The frontiers of kingdoms oscillated on the map, the sound of a superhuman sword drawn from its scabbard was heard, and he was seen standing erect on the horizon, with a gleaming cimeter in his hand, and a splendour in his eyes, unfolding amid the thunder his two wings, the Grand Army and the Old Guard. He was the archangel of war.”

All were silent, and Enjolras hung his head. Silence always produces somewhat the effect of acquiescence, or a sort of setting the back against the wall. Marius, almost without drawing breath, continued with increased enthusiasm:—

“Let us be just, my friends. What a splendid destiny for a people to be the empire of such an emperor, when that

people is France, and adds its own genius to the genius of that man! To appear and reign; to march and triumph; to have every capital as bivouac; to select grenadiers and make kings of them; to decree the downfall of dynasties; to transfigure Europe at double-quick step; to feel when you threaten that you lay your hand on the sword-hilt of God; to follow in one man Hannibal, Cæsar, and Charlemagne; to be the people of a ruler who accompanies your every day-break with the brilliant announcement of a battle gained; to be aroused in the morning by the guns of the Invalides; to cast into the abysses of light prodigious words which are eternally luminous,— Marengo, Arcola, Austerlitz, Jena, and Wagram! To produce each moment on the zenith of centuries constellations of victories; to make the French empire a counterpart of the Roman empire; to be the great nation, and to give birth to the Grand Army; to send its legions all over the world, as the mountain sends its eagles in all directions, to conquer, rule, and crush; to be in Europe a people gilded by glory; to sound a Titanic flourish of trumpets through history; to conquer the world twice, by conquest and by amazement,— all this is sublime, and what is there greater?"

"To be free," said Combeferre.

Marius in his turn hung his head. This simple, cold remark traversed his epic effusion like a steel blade, and he felt it fading away within him. When he raised his eyes, Combeferre was no longer there. Probably satisfied with his reply to the apotheosis, he had left the room, and all, except Enjolras, had followed him. Enjolras, alone with Marius, gazed gravely at him. Marius, however, having slightly collected his ideas, did not confess himself defeated; he was still in a mental ferment which was in all probability about to translate itself into syllogisms directed against Enjolras, when he suddenly heard some one singing on the staircase. It was Combeferre, and this is what he sang:

"If Cæsar should give me
Bloody battle and fame,
And the love of my mother

I must give for the same,
To great Cæsar I'd say,
'Take your sceptre, your bay;
My mother is dearer to me!
My mother is dearer to me!'"

The wild and tender tone in which Combeferre sang this couplet, lent it a strange grandeur. Marius, with his eye fixed pensively on the ceiling, repeated almost mechanically, "my mother!"

At that moment he felt Enjolras's hand on his shoulder.
"Citizen," said Enjolras, "my mother is the Republic."

CHAPTER VI

RES ANGUSTA

THAT evening left Marius profoundly stirred and with a sad shadow in his soul. He felt what the earth may feel when it is opened by the plowshare that the seed corn may be sowed,—it feels only the wound; the growth of the germ and the joy of the fruit does not come till later.

Marius was gloomy; he had only just gained a faith, and must he reject it already? He declared to himself that he would not; he resolved not to doubt, and began to doubt involuntarily. To stand between two religions, one of which you have not yet lost, and the other which you have not yet entered, is unendurable, and twilight only pleases bat-like souls. Marius was clear-sighted, and he required true light; the semi-lustre of doubt hurt him. Whatever might be his desire to remain where he was and cling to what he had, he was irresistibly constrained to continue, to advance, to think, to go farther. Whither would this lead him? He feared lest, after taking so many steps which had brought him nearer his father, he was now going to take steps which would carry

him away from him. His discomfort increased with all the reflections that occurred to him, and a rampart rose around him. He agreed neither with his grandfather nor his friends. He was too rash for the one and behind the times for the others; and he found himself doubly isolated, on the side of old age and on the side of youth. He left off going to the Café Musain.

In the troubled state of his conscience he did not think at all of certain serious sides of existence; but the realities of life will not allow themselves to be forgotten, and so they suddenly jogged his memory. One morning the landlord came into Marius's room, and said to him:—

“Monsieur Courfeyrac recommended you?”

“Yes.”

“But I want my money.”

“Ask Courfeyrac to come and speak to me,” said Marius.

When Courfeyrac came, the landlord left them, and Marius told his friend what he had not dreamed of telling him before,—that he was alone in the world, and had no relations.

“What will become of you?” said Courfeyrac.

“I have no idea,” Marius answered.

“What do you intend doing?”

“I do not know.”

“Have you any money?”

“Fifteen francs.”

“Are you willing to borrow from me?”

“Never.”

“Have you clothes?”

“There they are.”

“And jewelry?”

“A gold watch.”

“I know a second-hand clothes-man who will take your overcoat and a pair of trousers.”

“Very good.”

“You will have only a pair of trousers, a waistcoat, a hat, and a coat left.”

“And my boots.”

"What! You will not go barefoot? What opulence!"

"That will be enough."

"I know a jeweler who will buy your watch."

"All right."

"No, it is not all right. What will you do after that?"

"Anything that is necessary; anything that is honest."

"Do you know English?"

"No."

"Or German?"

"No."

"So much the worse."

"Why so?"

"Because a friend of mine, a publisher, is preparing a sort of encyclopædia, for which you could have translated English or German articles. The pay is bad, but it is possible to live on it."

"I will learn English and German."

"And in the mean time?"

"I will eat my clothes and my watch."

The clothes-dealer was sent for, and gave twenty francs for the coat and trousers; next they went to the jeweler, who bought the watch for forty-five francs.

"That's not so bad," said Marius to Courfeyrac on their return to the hotel. "With my fifteen francs, that makes eighty."

"And your bill here?" observed Courfeyrac.

"Oh, I forgot that!" said Marius.

The landlord presented his bill, which Marius was bound to pay at once; it amounted to seventy francs.

"I have ten francs left," said Marius.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Courfeyrac. "You will eat up five francs while you are learning English, and five while you are learning German. That will be swallowing a language very quickly or a five-franc piece very slowly."

Aunt Gillenormand, who was not a bad-hearted woman in cases of distress, had at last unearthed her nephew's abode.

One morning when Marius returned from the law school,

he found a letter from his aunt and the "sixty pistoles,"—that is to say, six hundred francs in gold,—in a sealed box.

Marius sent the thirty louis back to his aunt with a respectful note, in which he stated that he would be able in future to take care of himself. At that moment he had just three francs left.

The aunt did not tell his grandfather of this refusal, for fear of exasperating him. Besides, had he not said: "Never mention that blood-drinker's name in my presence."

Marius left the hotel of the Porte St. Jacques, as he did not wish to run into debt.

BOOK V

THE EXCELLENCE OF BAD LUCK.

CHAPTER I

MARIUS INDIGENT

LIFE became hard for Marius; to eat his clothes and his watch was nothing, but he also went through that indescribable process known as "chewing the cud." This is a horrible thing, containing days without bread, nights without sleep, evenings without candle, a hearth without fire, weeks without work, a future without hope, a coat out at elbows, an old hat at which the girls laugh, the door locked at night because the rent is not paid, the insolence of the porter and the eating-house keeper, the grins of neighbours, humiliations, dignity trampled under foot, work of any sort taken, disgust, bitterness, and despair. Marius learned to swallow all these things, and that they are often the only things which a man has to swallow. At that moment of his existence when a man needs his pride because he needs love, he felt that he was derided because he was meanly dressed, and ridiculous because he was poor. At the age when youth swells the heart with imperial pride, he looked down more than once at his worn-out boots, and knew the unjust shame and the burning blushes of poverty. It is an admirable and a terrible trial, from which the weak come forth infamous and the strong sublime. It is the crucible into which destiny throws a man whenever it requires a scoundrel or a demi-god.

Many great deeds are performed in minor struggles. There are obstinate and unknown heroes who defend themselves inch by inch in the shadows against the fatal invasion of want and turpitude. Theirs are noble and mysterious triumphs which no eye sees, no renown rewards, and no flourish of trumpets salutes. Life, misfortune, isolation, abandonment, and poverty are battle-fields which have their heroes,—obscure heroes who are sometimes greater than illustrious heroes.

Firm and exceptional natures are thus created. Misery, nearly always a step-mother, is sometimes a mother; destitution brings forth strength of soul and mind; distress is the nurse of pride, and misfortune is an excellent milk for the magnanimous.

There was a time in Marius's life when he swept his own landing, when he bought a sou's worth of Brie cheese from the fruiterer, when he waited till nightfall to go into the baker's shop and buy a loaf, which he carried stealthily to his garret as if he had stolen it. Sometimes there might have been seen slipping into the butcher's shop at the corner, among the gossiping cooks who elbowed him, an awkward young man, with books under his arm, who had a timid and yet an angry air, who on entering removed his hat from his dripping forehead, made a deep bow to the butcher's astonished wife, another to the foreman, asked for a mutton-chop, paid six or seven sous for it, wrapped the chop in paper, put it under his arm between two books, and went away. It was Marius; and on this chop, which he cooked himself, he lived for three days.

On the first day he ate the meat, on the second he ate the fat, and on the third he gnawed the bone. Aunt Gillenormand made several attempts, and sent him the sixty pistoles; but Marius always returned them, saying that he wanted for nothing.

He was still in mourning for his father when the revolution which we have described took place within him; and since then he had not left off black clothes, but the clothes left

him. A day came when he had no coat, though his trousers would still pass muster. What was he to do? Courfeyrac, to whom he, on his side, had done some good turns, gave him an old coat. For thirty sous, Marius had it turned by some porter, and it became a new coat. But it was green, and Marius henceforth did not go out till nightfall, which caused his coat to appear black. As he still wished to dress in mourning, he wrapped himself in the night.

In spite of all this he contrived to pass his examination, and was admitted to the bar. He was supposed to inhabit Courfeyrac's rooms, which were decent, and where a certain number of legal tomes, supported by broken-backed volumes of novels, represented the library prescribed by the regulations. His letters were addressed to Courfeyrac's lodgings.

When Marius was called to the bar, he informed his grandfather of the fact in a letter, which was cold, but full of submission and respect. M. Gillenormand took the letter with a trembling hand, read it, tore it in four pieces, and threw them into the waste basket. Two or three days later, Mlle. Gillenormand heard her father, who was alone in his room, talking aloud, as he always did when he was agitated. She listened, and heard the old gentleman say, "If you were not an ass, you would know that you cannot be at the same time a baron and a lawyer."

CHAPTER II

MARIUS POOR

IT is the same with misery as with everything else,—in the end it becomes possible; it assumes a shape. A man vegetates,—that is to say, is developed in a certain poor way, which is, however, sufficient for life. This is the sort of existence which Marius Pontmercy had secured:—

He had got over the worst straits, and the valley had opened slightly before him. By dint of labour, courage, perseverance, and will, he contrived to earn about seven hundred francs a year by his work. He had taught himself English and German; and, thanks to Courfeyrac, who introduced him to his friend the publisher, he filled the modest post of hack in his office. He wrote prospectuses, translated newspapers, annotated editions, compiled biographies, and, one year with another, his net receipts were seven hundred francs. He lived upon them — how? Not badly, as we shall show.

Marius occupied at No. 50-52, for the annual rent of thirty francs, a garret without a fireplace, which was called a "cabinet," and contained only the most indispensable articles of furniture. This furniture was his own. He paid three francs a month to the old "chief lodger" for sweeping out his hole, and bringing him every morning a little hot water, a new-laid egg, and a roll. On this roll and egg he breakfasted; and the outlay varied from two to four sous, according as eggs were cheap or dear. At six in the evening, he went to the Rue St. Jacques to dine at Rousseau's, exactly opposite Basset's, the print-shop at the corner of the Rue des Mathurins. He did not eat soup, but he ordered a plate of meat for six sous, a half portion of vegetables for three sous, and a three sous dessert. For three sous he had as much bread as he liked, and for wine he drank water. When he paid at the desk, where Madame Rousseau, at that period a fat and still good-looking dame, was majestically enthroned, he gave a sou to the waiter, and Madame Rousseau gave him a smile. Then he went away; for sixteen sous he had a smile and a dinner.

This Rousseau restaurant, where so few bottles and so many water-jugs were emptied, was rather a sedative than a restorer. It no longer exists; but the master had a wonderful nickname,— he was called "Rousseau the Aquatic."

Thus, with breakfast four sous, dinner sixteen, his food cost him three hundred and sixty-five francs a year. Add thirty francs for rent, the thirty-six francs for the old woman, and a few minor expenses, and for four hundred and fifty

francs Marius was boarded, lodged, and served. His clothes cost him a hundred francs, his linen fifty, his washing fifty, but the whole did not exceed six hundred and fifty francs. He had fifty left, and was rich; he sometimes lent ten francs to a friend, and Courfeyrac once actually borrowed sixty francs of him. As for fuel, as Marius had no fireplace, he "simplified" matters.

Marius always had two complete suits,—one old, for everyday wear, and the other new, for occasions; and both were black. He had but three shirts,—one on, one in the drawer, and one at the wash; and he renewed them as they became worn out. As they were usually torn, he had a fashion of buttoning his coat to the chin.

It had taken Marius years to reach this flourishing condition,—difficult years, in which he underwent great struggles; but his courage had not failed for a single day. As regarded want, he had suffered everything, and he had done everything, except run into debt. He gave himself the credit of never having owed any one a sou; for to him debt was the beginning of slavery. He said to himself that a creditor is worse than a master; for a master only holds your person, while a creditor holds your dignity and may insult it. Sooner than borrow he went without eating, and he had known many days of fasting. Feeling that unless a man is careful, reduction of fortune may lead to baseness of soul, he jealously watched over his pride. Many a remark or action which, under other circumstances, he would have regarded as deference, now seemed to him a platitude, and he resisted it. He ventured nothing, as he did not wish to withdraw anything. His face wore a stern flush, and he was timid almost to rudeness.

In all his trials he was encouraged, and to some extent supported, by a secret force within him; for the soul helps the body and at times raises it, and is the only bird that upholds its own cage.

Beside his father's name, another name was engraved on Marius's heart,—that of Thénardier. Marius, with his grave

and enthusiastic nature, surrounded with a sort of halo the man to whom he owed his father's life,—that intrepid sergeant who saved his colonel amid the cannon-balls and bullets of Waterloo. He never separated the memory of this man from that of his father, and he associated them in his veneration; it was a sort of shrine with two steps,—the high altar for the colonel, the lower one for Thénardier. What doubled the tenderness of his gratitude was the thought of the misfortune which he knew had befallen Thénardier,—swallowed him up. Marius had learned at Montfermeil the ruin and bankruptcy of the unfortunate landlord, and since then had made extraordinary efforts to find traces of him, and to reach him in the frightful abyss of misery in which Thénardier had disappeared. Marius searched the country: he visited Chelles, Bondy, Gournay, Nogent, and Lagny, and obstinately continued his search for three years, spending in these explorations the little money that he saved. No one could give him the slightest information of Thénardier, and it was supposed that he had gone abroad. His creditors had sought him too, with less love, but quite as much perseverance, as Marius, and had been unable to lay hands on him. Marius blamed himself, and was almost angry with himself for not succeeding in his search; it was the only debt the colonel had left him, and he felt in honour bound to pay it. “What!” he thought, “when my father lay dying on the battle-field, Thénardier contrived to find him in the midst of the smoke and grape-shot and carried him off on his shoulders, although he owed him nothing, while I, who owe so much to Thénardier, cannot come up with him in the shadow where he is dying of want, and in my turn bring him back from death to life. Oh, I will find him!” In fact, Marius would have given one of his arms to find Thénardier, and his last drop of blood to save him from want; and his sweetest and most magnificent dream was to see Thénardier, to do him some service, and say to him, “You do not know me, but I know you. Here I am; dispose of me.”

CHAPTER III

MARIUS GROWN UP

AT this period, Marius was twenty years of age. It was three years since he left his grandfather's house. They remained on the same terms, without attempting a reconciliation or trying to meet. What good would it have been to meet? — to come into collision again? Which of them would have got the better? Marius was the brass vase, but Father Gillenormand was the iron pot.

We are bound to say that Marius was mistaken as to his grandfather's heart; he imagined that M. Gillenormand had never loved him, and that the sharp, crusty, laughing old man, who cursed, shouted, stormed, and raised his cane, felt for him at the most only that slight and severe affection of the Gérontes, the dotards of comedy. Marius was mistaken. There are fathers who do not love their children; but there is no grandfather who does not adore his grandson. In his heart, as we said, M. Gillenormand idolized Marius. He idolized him, it is true, after his own fashion, with an accompaniment of abuse and even of blows; but when the lad had disappeared he felt a black void in his heart. He insisted that his name should never be mentioned, but secretly regretted that he was so strictly obeyed. At first, he hoped that this Bonapartist, this Jacobin, this terrorist, this Septembrist, would return; but weeks passed, months passed, years passed, and, to the great despair of M. Gillenormand the "blood drinker" did not reappear. "I could not do otherwise, though, than turn him out," said the grandfather; and he asked himself, "If it were to do over again, would I do it?" His pride at once answered "Yes;" but his old head, which he silently shook, sorrowfully answered "No." He had his hours of depression, for he missed Marius, and old men require affection as much as they do the sun to warm them. However strong he might naturally be,

the absence of Marius had wrought a change in him; nothing in the world would have induced him to take a step toward the "little scamp;" but he suffered. He never asked about him, but he thought of him constantly. He lived in greater retirement than ever in the Marais; he was still gay and violent as of yore, but his gayety had a convulsive harshness, as if it contained grief and passion, and his violence generally ended in a sort of gentle and sombre depression. He would say to himself at times, "Oh, if he were to come back, what a hearty box on the ear I would give him!"

As for the aunt, she thought too little to love much. To her, Marius was only a vague, black shadow; and in the end she paid much less attention to him than to the cat or the parrot which she probably had. What added to Father Gillenormand's secret suffering was, that he shut it up within himself, and did not allow its existence to be divined. His chagrin was like one of those newly invented furnaces which consume their own smoke. Sometimes officious friends would speak to him of Marius, and ask, "How is your grandson, and what is he doing?" The old tradesman would answer, with a sigh if he were sad, or with a flip of his frill if he wished to appear gay, "Baron Pontmercy is playing the lawyer in some corner or other."

While the old man regretted, Marius applauded himself. As is the case with all good hearts, misfortune had freed him from bitterness. He thought kindly of M. Gillenormand; but he was resolved never to accept anything from a man *who had been unjust to his father*. This was the mitigated translation of his first indignation. Moreover, he was glad that he had suffered, and was still suffering, for he did so for his father's sake. The hardness of his life satisfied and pleased him; and he said to himself, with a sort of joy, that *it was the least he could do*, and that it was an expiation; that, were it not so, he would have been punished, otherwise and hereafter, for his impious indifference toward his father, — and such a father; that it would not have been just for his father to have all the suffering and he none; and, besides, what

were his toil and want when compared with the colonel's heroic life? Lastly, that his only way of approaching his father, and resembling him, was to be valiant against indigence, as he had been brave against the enemy; and that this was doubtless what the colonel meant by the words, "he will be worthy of it,"—words which Marius continued to wear, not on his breast, as the colonel's letter had disappeared, but in his heart.

And then, again, on the day when his grandfather turned him out, he was only a boy, while now he was a man and felt he was so. Misery, we repeat, had been good for him; for poverty in youth, when it succeeds, has the magnificent result of turning the whole will toward effort, and the whole soul toward aspiration. Poverty at once lays bare material life and renders it hideous; and hence come indescribable soarings toward the ideal life. The rich young man has a thousand brilliant and coarse amusements,—races, shooting, dogs, tobacco, gambling, good dinners, and so on,—which are occupations of the lower side of the soul at the expense of the higher and more refined side. The poor young man has to work for his bread; and when he has eaten, he has only revery left him. He goes to the free spectacles which God gives him; he gazes at the sky, space, stars, flowers, children, the humanity in which he suffers, and the creation in which he shines. He looks so much at humanity that he sees the soul, and so much at creation that he sees God. He dreams, and feels himself great; he dreams again, and feels himself tender. From the egotism of the man who suffers, he passes to the compassion of the man who contemplates; and an admirable feeling is aroused in him,—forgetfulness of self, and pity for all. When he thinks of the numberless enjoyments which Nature offers, gives, and lavishes on open minds, and refuses to closed minds, he, the millionaire of intellect, learns to pity the millionaire of money. Hatred departs from his heart in proportion as light enters his mind. Moreover, is he unhappy? No; for the wretchedness of a young man is never wretched. Take the first lad who passes, however poor he may be, with his health,

his strength, his quick step, his sparkling eyes, his blood circulating warmly, his black hair, his ruddy cheeks, his coral lips, his white teeth, and his pure breath, and he will ever be an object of envy to an aged emperor. And then, each morning he sets to work afresh to earn his livelihood; and while his hands earn bread, his backbone gains strength, and his brain ideas. When his work is over, he returns to ineffable ecstasies, to contemplation and joys. He lives with his feet set in afflictions, in obstacles, on the pavement, in the brambles, or at times in the mud, but his head is in the light. He is firm, serene, gentle, peaceful, attentive, serious, satisfied with a little, and kindly; and he blesses God for having given him those two forms of riches which rich men often lack,—labour which makes him free, and thought which renders him worthy.

This is what had happened to Marius; and, truth to tell, he inclined almost too much to the side of contemplation. From the day when he felt tolerably certain of a livelihood, he stopped there, thinking it good to be poor, and taking from labour hours which he gave to thought. That is to say, he spent entire days now and then in dreaming, plunged like a visionary swallowed up in the silent delights of ecstasy. He had thus arranged the problem of his life,—to toil as little as possible at the material task, in order to work as much as possible at the impalpable task; in other words, to devote a few hours to real life, and throw the rest into the infinite. As he thought that he lacked nothing, he did not see that contemplation, thus understood, ends by becoming one of the forms of indolence; that he was content with subduing the absolute necessities of life; and that he was resting too soon.

It was evident that for such a generous and energetic nature as his, this could only be a transitional state, and that at the first collision with the inevitable complications of destiny Marius would wake.

Meantime, although he was called to the bar, and whatever Father Gillenormand might think, he did not play the pleader; for reverie had turned him away from pleas. It was a bore to flatter attorneys, attend regularly at the Palais de Jus-

tice, and seek for briefs. And why should he do it? He saw no reason to change his means of existence. His obscure and ill-paid task was assured to him; he had but little labour over it; and, as we have explained, he considered his income satisfactory.

One of the publishers for whom he worked — M. Magimel, I think — offered to take him into his own house, to lodge him comfortably, find him regular work, and pay him fifteen hundred francs a year. To be comfortably lodged, and have fifteen hundred francs a year! Agreeable things, no doubt; but, then, to resign his liberty, to be a hired servant, a sort of literary clerk! In the opinion of Marius, if he accepted, his position would become both better and worse. He would gain comfort and lose dignity; he would exchange a complete and fine misfortune for an ugly and ridiculous constraint; it would be something like a blind man who should regain the sight of one eye. So he declined the offer.

Marius lived in solitude. Owing to his inclination for holding aloof from everything, and also owing to the agitation he had undergone, he avoided the society presided over by Enjolras. They remained excellent friends, ready to help each other when opportunity offered, but nothing more. Marius had two friends,— one, young Courfeyrac; the other, old M. Mabœuf; and he inclined to the latter. In the first place, he owed him the revolution which had taken place in him, and to him he owed his knowledge and love of his father. “He operated on me for a cataract,” he would say.

Certainly this churchwarden had played a decisive part.

For all that, M. Mabœuf had only been the calm and impassive agent of Providence in this affair. He had enlightened Marius accidentally and unconsciously, just as a candle does which some one brings into a room; but he had been the *candle*, and not the *some one*.

As for the internal political revolution which had taken place in Marius, M. Mabœuf was entirely incapable of understanding, wishing or directing it.

As we shall meet M. Mabœuf again, a few remarks about him will not be thrown away.

CHAPTER IV

M. MABŒUF

ON the day when M. Mabœuf said to Marius, "I certainly approve of political opinions," he expressed the real state of his mind. All political opinions were a matter of indifference to him, and he approved of them all without distinction, providing that they left him in peace, just as the Greeks called the Furies "the beautiful, the good, the charming," the Eumenides. M. Mabœuf's political opinion was to love plants passionately, and books even more. He possessed, like everybody else, his termination in *ist*, without which no one could exist at that day; but he was neither royalist, Bonapartist, chartist, Orleanist, nor anarchist,—he was a bibliophilist.

He did not understand how men could come to hate each other for trifles like the charter, democracy, legitimacy, monarchy, the republic, etc., when there were in the world all sorts of mosses, grasses, and plants which they might look at, and piles of folios, and even 32mos, whose pages they might turn over. He was very careful not to be useless; his having books, did not prevent his reading them, and being a botanist did not prevent his being a gardener. When he knew Colonel Pontmercy, there was this sympathy between them, that the colonel did for flowers what he did for fruits. M. Mabœuf had succeeded in producing seedling pears as delicious as those of St. Germain; it is to one of his combinations, apparently that the October Mirabelle, which is still celebrated, and no less perfumed than the summer Mirabelles, owes its origin. He attended Mass more from gentleness than devotion, and because, while he loved men's faces but hated their noise, he found them assembled and silent only in church. Feeling that he must hold some position in the State, he selected that of churchwarden. He had never succeeded

in loving any woman so much as a tulip bulb, nor any man so much as an Elzevir. He had long passed his sixtieth year, when some one asked him one day, "How is it that you never married?" "I have forgotten," he said. When he happened to say — and to whom does it not happen? — "Oh, if I were rich!" it was not when ogling a pretty girl, like Father Gillenormand, but when contemplating a quarto. He lived alone with an old housekeeper; he was rather gouty, and when he slept, his old chalk-stoned fingers formed an arch in the folds of the sheets. He had written and published a "Flora of the Environs of Caunteretz," with coloured plates, a work of some merit of which he possessed the plates, and sold it himself. People rang at his door in the Rue Mézières two or three times a day to buy a copy; he made a profit of about two thousand francs a year by the book, and this was nearly his whole fortune. Although poor, he had contrived by patience and privation, and with time, to form a valuable collection of all sorts of rare copies. He never went out without a book under his arm, and frequently returned with two. The sole ornaments of his four rooms on the ground-floor, which, with a small garden, formed his lodging, were herbals, and engravings by old masters. The sight of a musket or a sabre froze him; and in his life he had never walked up to a cannon, not even at the Invalides. He had a tolerable stomach, a brother who was a priest, very white hair, no teeth in his mouth or in his mind, a tremor in every limb, a Picardy accent, a childish laugh, and the air of an old sheep. He was easily frightened. Withal, he had no other friend or acquaintance among the living than an old bookseller at the Porte St. Jacques, of the name of Royol; and the dream of his life was to naturalize indigo in France.

His maid-servant was also a sort of innocent. The good woman was an old maid, and Sultan, her tom-cat, who might have mewed the "Miserere" of Allegri in the Sistine Chapel, filled her heart, and sufficed for the amount of passion within her. Not one of her dreams had ever gone so far as a man. She had never got beyond her cat; like him, she had a mus-

tache. Her glory consisted in spotless white caps, and she spent her time on Sunday, after Mass, in counting the linen in her box, and spreading on her bed the gowns which she bought in the piece and never had made up. She knew how to read, and M. Mabœuf had christened her Mother Plutarch.

M. Mabœuf had taken a fancy to Marius, because the young man, being young and gentle, warmed his old age without startling his timidity. Youth, combined with gentleness, produces on aged people the effect of sun without wind. When Marius was saturated with military glory, gunpowder, marches and countermarches, and all the prodigious battles in which his father gave and received such mighty sabrecuts, he went to see M. Mabœuf, who talked to him about the hero in his connection with flowers.

About the year 1830 his brother, the priest died, and almost immediately after, as when night falls, the entire horizon grew dark for M. Mabœuf. The bankruptcy of a notary despoiled him of ten thousand francs,—all he possessed of his brother's capital and his own,—while the revolution of July produced a crisis in the book trade. In times of pressure the first thing which does not sell is a "Flora;" and the "Flora of the Environs of Caunteretz" stopped short. Weeks passed without a purchaser. Sometimes M. Mabœuf started at the sound of the house-bell; but Mother Plutarch would say sadly, "It is the water-carrier, sir." In a word M. Mabœuf left the Rue Mézières one day, resigned his office as churchwarden, gave up St. Sulpice, sold a portion, not of his books, but of his engravings, for which he cared least, and installed himself in a small house on the Boulevard Montparnasse where, however, he remained only three months, for two reasons,—in the first place, the ground-floor and garden cost three hundred francs, and he did not dare set aside more than two hundred francs for rent; and secondly, as he was close to the Fatou shooting-gallery, he heard pistol-shots, which he could not endure.

He carried off his "Flora," his copper-plates, his herbals, portfolios, and books, and settled down near the Salpêtrière,

in a sort of thatched cottage, in the village of Austerlitz, where he rented for fifty crowns a year three rooms, a garden enclosed by a hedge, and a well. He took advantage of this removal to sell nearly all his furniture. On the day when he entered his new house he was in very good spirits, and drove in with his own hands the nails on which the herbariums and engravings were to hang. He dug in his garden for the rest of the day; and at night, seeing that Mother Plutarch had an anxious look and was thoughtful, he tapped her on the shoulder and said with a smile, "We have the indigo."

Only two visitors (the publisher and Marius) were allowed admission to his hut in Austerlitz,—a noisy name, by the way, which was most disagreeable to him.

As we have remarked, things of this world permeate very slowly brains absorbed in wisdom, or folly, or, as often happens, in both at once. Their own destiny is remote from them. The result of such concentration is a passiveness which, were it rational, would resemble philosophy. Men sink, decline, drift away, even crumble to pieces, without being exactly conscious of it, though it always ends in a re-awakening; but the awakening is tardy. Meantime, it seems as if they were neutral in the game, which is being played between their happiness and misery; they are the stakes, and look on at the game with indifference.

It was thus that M. Mabœuf remained rather childishly but most profoundly serene, amidst the clouds which were gradually enveloping him, and while his hopes were extinguished in turn. The habits of his mind had the regular movement of a clock; and when he was once wound up by an illusion, he went on for a very long time, even after the illusion had disappeared. A clock does not stop at the precise moment when the key is lost.

M. Mabœuf had innocent pleasures, which cost but little and were unexpected, and the slightest accident supplied him with them.

One day Mother Plutarch was reading a novel in the corner of the room; she was reading aloud, finding that she under-

stood better in that way. There are some persons who read very loud, and look as if they were pledging themselves their word of honour about what they are reading.

Mother Plutarch read her novel with an energy of this nature, and M. Mabœuf heard her without listening.

While reading, Mother Plutarch came to the following passage, relating to an officer of dragoons and a beauty:

“The beauty pouted, and the dragoon —”

Here she broke off to wipe her spectacles.

“Buddha and the dragon,” M. Mabœuf repeated in a low voice. “Yes, that is true; there was a dragon, which lived in a cavern, belched flames, and set fire to the sky. Several stars had already been burned up by this monster, which had tiger claws, by the bye, when Buddha went into its den and succeeded in converting the dragon. That is an excellent book you are reading, Mother Plutarch, and there cannot be a finer legend.”

And M. Mabœuf fell into a delicious reverie.

CHAPTER V

POVERTY A GOOD NEIGHBOUR TO MISERY

MARIUS liked this candid old man who saw himself slowly falling into the clutches of poverty, and who was somewhat surprised, yet not depressed, by it. Marius met Courfeyracs, and sought M. Mabœuf,—very rarely, however; once or twice a month at the most.

Marius's delight was to take long walks alone, either on the outer boulevards, or on the Champ de Mars, or in the least-frequented walks of the Luxembourg. He often spent half a day looking at a market-garden,—the patches of lettuce, the fowls on the dung-heap, and the horse turning the water-wheel. Passers-by looked at him in surprise, and some

thought his dress suspicious and his mien dangerous, while he was only a poor young man thinking without an object.

It was in one of these walks that he discovered the Gorbeau House; and its isolation and the cheapness tempting him, he took a room there. He was known only by the name of M. Marius.

Some of his father's old generals and old comrades invited him to come and see them, when they knew of him; and Marius did not refuse, for they gave him an opportunity to talk of his father. He called thus from time to time upon Count Pajol, General Bellavesne, and General Frérion, at the Invalides. There was generally music and dancing, and on such evenings Marius put on his best suit; but he never went to such parties except on days when it was freezing tremendously hard, for he could not pay for a vehicle, and he would not go unless his boots were like looking-glasses.

He would sometimes say, though not at all bitterly, "Men are so constituted that in a drawing-room you may have mud everywhere except on your boots. In order to insure a proper reception, only one irreproachable thing is expected of you, — your conscience? no; your boots."

All passions, save those of the heart, are dissipated by revery. The political fever of Marius vanished thus; and the revolution of 1830 aided in this process, by satisfying and calming him. He remained the same, except in his passion; he still held the same opinions, but they were softened down. Properly speaking, he no longer had opinions, but sympathies. To what party did he belong? To that of humanity. Out of humanity he selected France; out of the nation he chose the people; and out of the people, woman, and his pity was mainly given to her. Now he preferred an idea to a fact, a poet to a hero, and he admired a book like *Job* even more than an event like *Marengo*; and when after a day spent in meditation, he returned at evening along the boulevards, and saw through the trees the illimitable space, the nameless gleams, the abyss, the shadow, and the mystery, all that which is only human seemed to him infinitely little.

He believed that he had — and probably he had — reached the truth of life and of human philosophy; and he ended by gazing at nothing but the sky,—the only thing which Truth can see from the bottom of her well.

This did not prevent him from multiplying plans, combinations, scaffoldings, and projects for the future. In this state of revery, any eye which had seen into Marius's interior would have been dazzled by the purity of his soul. In fact, if our eyes of the flesh were allowed to peer into the consciences of our neighbours, a man could be judged far more surely by what he dreams than by what he thinks. There is volition in thought, but there is none in a dream, and the latter, which is entirely spontaneous, assumes and retains, even in the gigantic and the ideal, the image of our mind. Nothing proceeds more directly and more sincerely from the bottom of our soul than our thoughtless and unbounded aspirations toward the splendours of destiny. The true character of every man is far more certainly to be found in these aspirations than in deliberate, rational, and co-ordinated ideas. Our chimeras are the things which most resemble ourselves; and each man dreams of the unknown and the impossible according to his nature.

About the middle of the year 1831, the old woman who waited on Marius told him that his neighbours, the wretched Jondrette family, were going to be turned out. Marius, who spent nearly his whole time out-of-doors, scarcely knew that he had neighbours.

"Why are they turned out?" he asked.

"Because they do not pay their rent, and owe two quarters."

"How much is it?"

"Twenty francs," said the old woman.

Marius had thirty francs in reserve in a drawer.

"Here are twenty-five francs," he said to the woman; "pay the rent for the poor people, give them five francs, and do not tell them where the money comes from."

CHAPTER VI

THE SUBSTITUTE

CHANCE decreed that the regiment to which Lieutenant Théodule belonged should be quartered in Paris. This was an opportunity for Aunt Gillenormand to have a second idea; her first one had been to set Théodule to watch Marius, and she now plotted to set Théodule in Marius's shoes.

At all events, and in case the grandfather felt a vague desire for a youthful face in the house,—for such rays of dawn are sometimes sweet to ruins,—it was expedient to find another Marius. “Well,” she thought, “it is only a simple erratum, such as I see in books; for *Marius* read *Théodule*.”

A grand-nephew is much the same as a grandson, after all; and in default of a barrister you can take a lancer.

One morning as M. Gillenormand was going to read something like the “*Quotidienne*,” his daughter came in and said in her softest voice, for the interests of her favourite were at stake:—

“Papa, Théodule is coming this morning to pay his respects to you.”

“Who is Théodule?”

“Your grand-nephew.”

“Ah!” said the old gentleman.

Then he began to read, thought no more of the grand-nephew, who was only some Théodule or other, and soon became angry, which nearly always happened when he read. The “sheet” which he held (a royalist one, we need hardly say), announced for the morrow, without any softening of words, one of the little daily events of Paris at that day. “The pupils of the schools of law and medicine were to assemble in the Pantheon Square at noon,—to deliberate.” It was one of the questions of the moment,—the artillery of the National Guard, and a conflict between the Minister of

War and the "Citizen's Militia," on the subject of guns parked in the courtyard of the Louvre. The students were to "deliberate" on this; and it did not require much more to render M. Gillenormand furious.

He thought of Marius, who was a student, and who probably would go, like the others, "to deliberate at midday in the Pantheon Square."

While he was making these painful reflections, Lieutenant Théodule came in, dressed in mufti (which was clever of him), and was discreetly introduced by Mlle. Gillenormand. The lancer had reasoned thus; "the old Druid has not sunk all his money in an annuity, and so it is worth while to disguise one's self in plain clothes now and then."

Mlle. Gillenormand said aloud to her father:—

"Théodule, your grand-nephew."

And in a whisper to the lieutenant:—

"Agree to everything." And she retired.

The lieutenant, but little accustomed to such venerable meetings, stammered, with some timidity, "Good-morning, uncle," and made a bow which began with the involuntary and mechanical military salute, and ended off with the bow of the citizen.

"Ah, it is you; very good, sit down," said the old gentleman; and after saying this, he utterly forgot the lancer.

Théodule sat down, and M. Gillenormand got up.

He began to walk up and down the room, with his hands in his pockets, talking aloud, and pulling with his irritated old fingers at the two watches which he wore in his two fobs.

"That heap of scamps! so they are to meet in the Pantheon Square! Upon my word, little ragamuffins who were at nurse but yesterday! if you were to squeeze their noses the milk would run out. And they are to deliberate to-morrow! What are we coming to? what are we coming to? It is clear that we are going to the dogs, and the *descamisados* have brought us to it. The Citizen Artillery! deliberate about the Citizen Artillery! go and chatter in the open air about the squibs of the National Guard! and whom will they meet

there? Just see to what Jacobinism leads. I will wager what ever you like, a million against a counter, that there will be none but returned convicts and pickpockets there; for the republicans and the galley-slaves are like one nose and one handkerchief. Carnot used to say, 'Where do you want me to go, traitor?' and Fouché would answer, 'Wherever you like, fool!' That is what the republicans are."

"That is true," said Théodule.

M. Gillenormand half turned his head, saw Théodule, and went on:—

"And then to think that that scamp had the villainy to become a republican! Why did you leave my house? To become a republican! Psst! in the first place the people do not want your republic, for they have common sense, and know very well that there always have been kings, and always will be; they know very well that the people are only the people after all, and they laugh at your republic, do you hear, idiot? Is not such a caprice horrible? To fall in love with Père Duchesne, to make eyes at the guillotine, to sing romances, and play the guitar under the balcony of '93,—why, all these young men ought to be spat upon, they are so stupid! They are all alike; not one escapes. They have only to breathe the air of the street to go mad. The nineteenth century is poison; the first rascal who comes along, lets his beard grow like a goat's, believes himself a genuine scoundrel, and runs away from his old relatives. That is republican, it is romantic; just be good enough to tell me what that word *romantic* means;—every possible folly. A year ago they went to see 'Hernani.' Just let me ask you, 'Hernani'! antitheses, abominations, which are not even written in French. And then there are cannon in the courtyard of the Louvre; such is the brigandage of the present age."

"You are right, uncle," said Théodule.

M. Gillenormand continued:—

"Guns in the courtyard of the Museum! What for? Cannon, what would you have? Would you fire grape-shot at the Apollo Belvidere? What have cartridges to do with

the Venus de Medici? Oh, the young men of the present day are all scamps, and this Benjamin Constant is not much. And those who are not villains are boobies! They do all they can to make themselves ugly,—they dress badly, they are afraid of women, and in the presence of petticoats they have a beggarly air which makes the girls laugh; on my word of honour, you would think the poor fellows were ashamed of love. They are deformed, and put the finishing touch to it by being stupid; they repeat the jokes of Tiercelin and Potier; they wear sack-coats, hostlers' waistcoats, trousers of coarse cloth, boots of coarse leather, and their chatter resembles their plumage,—their jargon might be used to resole their boots. And all these silly brats have political opinions, and it should be strictly prohibited. They manufacture systems, they remodel society, they demolish the monarchy, upset all laws, put the garret in the place of the cellar, and my porter in the place of the king; they turn Europe upside down, reconstruct the world, and their love affairs consist in looking sheepishly at the legs of the washerwomen as they get into their carts. Ah, Marius! ah, scoundrel; to go and vociferate in the public square! to discuss, debate and take measures—they call them measures. Great gods! why, disorder is degenerating and becoming silly. I have seen chaos; I now see a puddle. Scholars deliberating about the National Guard! Why, such a thing could not be seen among the Ojibiways or the Cacodaches! Savages who go about naked, with their noddles dressed like a racket-bat, with a club in their paw, are less of brutes than these bachelors of arts, two-penny-half-penny monkeys, who set up for judges. Deliberate and argue, indeed! Why, the end of the world has come; it is evidently the end of this wretched terraqueous globe; it wanted a final shove, and France has given it. Deliberate, my scamps! These things will happen so long as they go and read the papers under the arcades of the Odeon; it costs them a sou, and their common sense, and their intelligence, and their heart, and soul, and their wits. They leave that place, and then take French leave of their family. All newspapers are

pests, even the 'Drapeau Blanc'! and Martainville was a Jacobin at heart. Ah, just Heaven! you can boast of having driven your grandfather to despair."

"That is quite plain," said Théodule.

And taking advantage of the fact that M. Gillenormand was taking breath, the lancer added magisterially:—

"There should be no paper but the 'Moniteur,' and no book but the 'Army List.'"

M. Gillenormand went on. —

"It is just like their Sièyes! A regicide who became a senator! for that's the way they always end. They scar themselves with their thee-ing and thou-ing, so that in the long run they may be called Monsieur le Comte —, Monsieur le Comte As-long-as-my-arm, slaughterers of September. The philosopher Sièyes! I do myself the justice to say that I never cared any more for the philosophy of all these philosophers than I did for the spectacles of the grimacer of Tivoli. One day I saw the senators pass along the Quay Malaquais, in violet velvet cloaks studded with bees, and wearing Henri IV. hats; they were hideous, and looked like apes from the tiger's court. Citizens, I declare to you that your progress is madness, that your humanity is a dream, that your revolution is a crime, that your republic is a monster, that your young and virgin France emerges from a brothel; and I maintain it against you all, whether you be journalists, social economists, lawyers, or greater connoisseurs of liberty, equality, and fraternity than the knife of the guillotine! I tell you this plainly, my good fellows."

"Zounds!" cried the lieutenant, "that is wonderfully true!"

M. Gillenormand paused in a gesture which he had begun, turned round, gazed intently at Théodule the lancer and said:—

"You are an ass."

BOOK VI.

CONJUNCTION OF TWO STARS

CHAPTER I

NICKNAMES AND FAMILY NAMES

MARIUS at this period was a handsome young man of middle height, with thick black hair, a lofty and intelligent forehead, open and impassioned nostrils, a calm, sincere air, and something haughty, pensive, and innocent about his whole face. His profile, in which all the lines were rounded without ceasing to be firm, had that Germanic gentleness which entered France through Alsace and Lorraine, and that absence of angles which rendered it so easy to recognize the Sicambri among the Romans, and which distinguishes the leonine from the aquiline race. He had reached the season of life when the mind of men who think is composed in nearly equal proportions of depth and simplicity. A serious situation being given, he had all that was necessary to be stupid; but, with one more turn of the screw, he could be sublime. His manner was reserved, cold, polite, and unexpansive; but as his mouth was beautiful, his lips the reddest, and his teeth the whitest in the world, his smile corrected any severity in his countenance. At certain moments that chaste brow and voluptuous smile presented a strange contrast. His eye was small, his glance great.

At the time of his greatest need, he remarked that young girls turned to look at him when he passed; and he hurried

away or hid himself, with death in his soul. He thought that they were looking at his shabby clothes, and laughing at them; but the fact is, they were looking at his grace, and dreaming of it.

This silent misunderstanding between himself and pretty passers-by had made him shy, and he did not select one of them, for the simple reason that he fled from all. He lived thus indefinitely,—stupidly, said Courfeyrac.

Courfeyrac added: “Do not aspire to be venerable, and take one bit of advice, my dear fellow. Do not read so many books, and look at the wenches a little more. The magpies have some good points. Oh, Marius, you will grow a perfect brute if you go on shunning women and blushing.”

On other occasions, Courfeyrac, when he met him, would say: “Good-morning, Abbé.”

When Courfeyrac had made any remark of this nature, Marius for a whole week would avoid women, young and old, more than ever, and Courfeyrac into the bargain.

There were, however, in the whole immense creation, two women whom Marius did not shun, and to whom he paid no attention. To tell the truth, he would have been greatly surprised had any one told him that they were women. One was the hairy-faced old woman who swept his room, and induced Courfeyrac to remark: “Seeing that his servant wears her beard, Marius does not wear his;” the other was a young girl whom he saw very frequently and never looked at.

For more than a year, Marius had noticed in a deserted walk of the Luxembourg (the one which borders the Parapet de la Pepinière), a man and a very young girl, who were almost always seated side by side on the same bench at the most solitary end of the walk, near the Rue de l’Ouest. Whenever that chance, which meddles with the promenades of persons whose gaze is turned inward, led Marius to this walk, and that was nearly every day, he found this couple there.

The man seemed about sixty years of age. He appeared sad and serious, and his whole person presented the robust

and fatigued appearance peculiar to military men who have retired from service. If he had worn a decoration, Marius would have said: "He is an old officer." He looked kind, but unapproachable, and never fixed his eye on that of another person. He wore blue trousers, a coat of the same colour, and a broad-brimmed hat, all of which seemed constantly new, a black cravat, and a Quaker's shirt,—that is to say, it was dazzlingly white, but very coarse. A grisette who passed him one day, said: "What a tidy old widower." His hair was very white.

The first time that the young girl who accompanied him sat down with him upon the bench which they seemed to have adopted, she was about thirteen or fourteen, so thin as to be almost ugly, awkward, insignificant, and with a possible promise of fine eyes some day, only they were always raised with a sort of displeasing assurance. She wore the garb, at once old and childish, of a pupil at some convent,—a badly cut dress of coarse black merino. They looked like father and daughter.

For two or three days Marius studied the old man, who was not yet aged, and this little girl, who was not yet a woman, and then paid no further attention to them. They, on their side, seemed not even to see him, and talked together with a peaceful, careless air. The girl talked incessantly and gayly; the old man spoke but little, and at times he fixed upon her eyes filled with ineffable paternity. Marius had formed the mechanical habit of walking in this alley, and invariably found them there.

This is how matters went on:—

Marius generally arrived by the end of the walk farthest from the bench. He walked the whole length, passed them, then turned back to the end whence he came, and began again. He did this five or six times in the course of his walk, and he took the walk nearly every day in the week; but these persons and himself never even exchanged a bow. The man and the girl, though they appeared, and perhaps because they appeared, to shun observation, had naturally aroused some little

attention on the part of the five or six students who occasionally strolled along La Pepinière, the studious after their lectures, the others after their game of billiards. Courfeyrac who belonged to the latter group, had watched them for some time; but finding the girl ugly, he got away from them very rapidly, firing at them a soubriquet, like a Parthian dart. Being solely struck by the dress of the girl and the old man's hair, he christened the former Mlle. Lanoire, and the latter Monsieur Leblanc, so that, as no one knew them otherwise, this name adhered to them in the absence of a better. The students said: "Ah, M. Leblanc is at his bench;" and Marius, like the rest, found it convenient to call the unknown gentleman M. Leblanc.

We will follow their example, and speak of him as M. Leblanc.

Marius saw them almost daily, at the same hour, for a year. He found the man to his taste, but the girl rather stupid.

CHAPTER II

LUX FACTA EST

IN the second year, just at the point of our story which the reader has now reached, it happened that Marius broke off his daily walk in the Luxembourg, without exactly knowing why, and was nearly six months without setting foot in the garden. One day, however, he returned to it. It was a beautiful summer day, and Marius was joyous, as men are when the weather is fine. He felt as if he had in his heart all the birds' songs that he heard, and all the patches of blue sky of which he caught glimpses between the leaves.

He went straight to "his" walk, and when he reached the end he saw the well-known couple seated on the same bench; but when he drew near he found that, while it was the same

man, it did not seem to be the same girl. The person he now saw was a tall and lovely creature, possessing the charming outlines of the woman at the precise moment when they are still combined with the most simple graces of the child,—a pure and fugitive moment which can only be rendered by the two words “fifteen years.” She had wonderful auburn hair tinted with threads of gold, a forehead that seemed made of marble, cheeks that seemed made of rose-leaf, a pale flush, an evanescent whiteness, an exquisite mouth, from which smiles issued like sunbeams, and words like music, and a head which Raffaele would have given to a Virgin, set upon a neck which Jean Goujon would have given to a Venus. And, that nothing might be wanting in this ravishing face, the nose was not beautiful, but pretty, neither straight nor bent, neither Italian nor Greek. It was the Parisian nose,—that is to say, witty, fine, irregular, and pure, the despair of painters and the charm of poets.

When Marius passed her, he could not see her eyes, which she constantly drooped; he only saw her long chestnut lashes, penetrated with shadow and modesty.

This did not prevent the lovely girl from smiling as she listened to the white-haired man who was speaking to her, and nothing could be more ravishing than her fresh smile and her downcast eyes.

At first Marius thought that this was another daughter, no doubt a sister of the former. But when the invariable habit of his walk brought him for the second time to the bench, and he examined her attentively, he perceived that it was the same girl. In six months the child had become a woman; that was all. Nothing is more frequent than this phenomenon. There is a moment when girls blossom out in a twinkling and become roses all at once. You left them children yesterday, to-day you find them objects of anxiety.

This girl had not only grown, she was idealized. As three days in April suffice to cover certain trees with flowers, six months had sufficed to clothe her with beauty; her April had come.

We sometimes see poor and insignificant persons suddenly wake up, pass from indigence to opulence, lay out money in all sorts of extravagance, and become brilliant, prodigal, and magnificent. The reason is that they have just received their dividends; a note fell due yesterday. The girl had received her six months' allowance.

And then, she was no longer the boarding-school miss, with her plush bonnet, merino dress, thick shoes, and red hands; taste had come to her with beauty. She was well dressed, with a sort of simple, rich, and unaffected elegance. She wore a black brocade dress, a cloak of the same material, and a white crape bonnet; her white gloves displayed the delicacy of her hand, which played with the ivory handle of a parasol, and her satin shoe revealed the smallness of her foot. When you passed her, her whole toilet exhaled a youthful and penetrating perfume.

As for the man, he was still the same.

The second time that Marius passed, the girl raised her eyelids. Her eyes were of a deep cœrulean blue, but in this veiled azure there was as yet only the glance of a child. She looked at Marius carelessly, as she would have looked at the child playing under the sycamores, or the marble vase that threw a shadow over the bench; and Marius continued his walk, thinking of something else.

He passed the bench four or five times, but did not once turn his eyes toward the girl.

On the following days he returned, as usual, to the Luxembourg. As usual, he found the "father and daughter" there, but he paid no further attention to them. He thought no more of the girl now that she was lovely, than he had when she was ugly; and though he always passed very close to the bench on which she was sitting, it was solely the result of habit.

CHAPTER III

THE EFFECT OF SPRING

ONE day the air was warm, the Luxembourg was inundated with light and shade, the sky was as pure as if the angels had washed it that morning, the sparrows were twittering shrilly in the leaves of the chestnut-trees, and Marius opened his whole soul to Nature. He was thinking of nothing; he simply lived and breathed. He passed by the bench, the girl raised her eyes, and their two glances met.

What was there in her look? Marius could not have said. There was nothing, and there was everything. It was a strange flash.

She let her eyes fall, and he continued his walk.

What he had just seen was no longer the simple and ingenuous eye of a child, but a mysterious gulf, which had half opened and then suddenly closed again.

There comes a day when every maiden looks in this way, and woe to the man on whom her glance falls!

This first glance of a soul which does not yet know itself is like the dawn in the heavens. It is the awakening of something radiant and unknown. Nothing can render the mysterious charm of this unexpected glow which suddenly illumines the adorable darkness, and is made up of all the innocence of the present and all the passion of the future. It is a sort of undecided tenderness, which reveals itself accidentally, and waits. It is a snare which innocence sets unconsciously, and in which it captures hearts without wishing or knowing it.

It is a virgin who looks like a woman.

It is rare for a profound revery not to spring up from this glance wherever it falls. All purity and all candour meet in that heavenly and fatal beam, which possesses, more than the best-managed ogles of coquettes, the magic power of sud-

denly causing that dangerous flower, full of perfume and poison, called love, to expand suddenly in the soul.

On returning to his garret that evening, Marius took a glance at his clothes, and perceived for the first time that he had been guilty of the extraordinary impropriety, slovenliness, and stupidity of walking in the Luxembourg in his "every-day dress,"—that is to say, with a broken-brimmed hat, clumsy boots, black trousers white at the knees, and a black coat pale at the elbows.

CHAPTER IV

BEGINNING OF A GRIEVOUS MALADY

THE next day, at the accustomed hour, Marius took out of the drawers his new coat, his new trousers, his new hat, and his new boots. He dressed himself in this complete panoply, put on gloves,—a prodigious luxury,—and went off to the Luxembourg.

On the way he met Courfeyrac, and pretended not to see him. Courfeyrac, on reaching home, said to his friends:—

"I have just met Marius's new hat and new coat, with Marius inside them. He was going to pass some examination, no doubt, for he looked very stupid."

On reaching the Luxembourg, Marius walked round the fountain and gazed at the swans; then he stood for a long time contemplating a statue, whose head was all black with mould, and which had lost one hip. Near the basin was a comfortable tradesman of about forty, holding by the hand a little boy of five, and saying to him: "Avoid all excesses, my son; keep at an equal distance from despotism and anarchy." Marius listened to this old fellow, then walked round the basin once more, and at length proceeded toward "his" walk slowly, and as if regretfully. He seemed to be

at once forced and prevented from going; but he did not explain this to himself, and fancied he was behaving as he did every day.

On turning into the walk, he saw M. Leblanc and the young lady at the other end, seated on "their" bench. He buttoned his coat up to the top, pulled it down so that it should make no creases, examined with some complacency the lustre of his trousers, and marched on the bench. This march savoured of attack, and assuredly of a desire for conquest; and hence I say that he marched on the bench, as I would say Hannibal marched on Rome.

Still, all his movements were purely mechanical, and he had not in any way altered the habitual preoccupation of his mind and labours. He was thinking at that moment that the "Baccalaureate's Manual" was a stupid book, and that it must have been edited by wondrous ignoramuses, who analyzed as masterpieces of the human mind three tragedies of Racine and only one comedy of Molière. There was a shrill whistling in his ear, and as he approached the bench he pulled down his coat, and his eyes were fixed on the maiden. He imagined that she filled the whole end of the walk with a vague blue light.

As he drew nearer, his pace gradually slackened. On coming within a certain distance of the bench, but long before he reached the end of the walk, he stopped and did not know how it was that he turned back. The young lady could scarcely have seen him in the distance, or noted how well he looked in his new suit. Still, he held himself very erect, for fear any one behind might be looking at him.

He reached the opposite end, then turned, and this time drew a little nearer to the bench. He even got within the distance of three trees; but then he felt it impossible to go farther, and hesitated. He thought he could see the young lady's face turned toward him; however, he made a masculine and violent effort, subdued his hesitation, and walked straight on. A few seconds later he passed in front of the bench, upright and firm, but red to the ears, and not daring to glance



"He passed in front of the bench, upright and firm, but red to the ears—with his hand thrust into his coat like a statesman."

Les Misérables. Marius: Page 149.

either to the right or left, with his hand thrust into his coat like a statesman. As he passed under the guns of the fort, he felt his heart beat violently. She was dressed as on the previous day, and he heard an ineffable voice which must be "her" voice. She was talking quietly, and was very beautiful. He felt it, though he did not attempt to look at her. "And yet," he thought, "she could not fail to feel esteem and consideration for me if she knew that I am the real author of the dissertation on Marcos Obregon de la Ronda, which M. François de Neufchateau appropriated and used as the preface to his edition of 'Gil Blas.'"

He passed the bench, went to the end of the walk, which was close by, then turned, and again passed the young lady. This time he was very pale, and his feelings were most disagreeable. He went away from the bench and the maiden, and as his back was turned, he fancied that she was looking at him, and this made him stumble.

He did not again attempt to pass the bench. He stopped at about the middle of the walk and then sat down,—a most unusual thing for him,—taking side glances, and thinking in the innermost depths of his soul that after all it was hard that a person whose white bonnet and black dress he admired should be absolutely insensible to his shining trousers and new coat.

At the end of a quarter of an hour he rose, as if about to walk toward that bench which was surrounded by a glory. But he remained motionless. For the first time in fifteen months he said to himself that the gentleman who sat there daily with his daughter must have noticed him, and probably considered his assiduity strange.

For the first time, too, he felt that it was rather irreverent to designate that stranger, even in his own thoughts, by the nickname of M. Leblanc.

He stood thus for some minutes with hanging head, making sketches in the sand with the stick which he held in his hand. Then he suddenly turned in the direction opposite to the bench and went home.

That day he forgot to dine. He perceived the fact at eight in the evening; and as it was too late to go to the Rue St. Jacques, he ate a lump of bread.

He did not go to bed till he had brushed and carefully folded his coat.

CHAPTER V

MA'AM BOUGON IS THUNDERSTRUCK

THE next day, Ma'am Bougon, as Courfeyrac called the old portress, "chief lodger," and charwoman of No. 50-52, though her real name was Madame Bougon, as we have stated, but that iconoclast of a Corfeyrac respected nothing,—Ma'am Bougon, to her stupefaction, noticed that Marius had gone out again in his best coat.

He returned to the Luxembourg, but did not go beyond his half-way bench. He sat down there, as on the previous day, surveying from a distance, and distinctly, seeing the white bonnet, the black dress, and, above all, the blue light. He did not move or return home till the gates of the Luxembourg were closed. He did not see M. Leblanc and his daughter leave, and hence concluded that they left the garden by the gate in the Rue de l'Ouest. Some weeks after, when reflecting on the subject, he could never remember where he dined that day.

On the next day, the third, Ma'am Bougon received another thunderstroke: Marius went out in his new coat. "Three days running!" she exclaimed.

She tried to follow him, but Marius walked quickly, and with immense strides. It was a hippopotamus attempting to catch up with a chamois. She lost sight of him in two minutes, and went back panting, three parts choked by her asthma, and furious. "What sense is there," she growled,

"in putting on one's best coat every day, and making people run like that!"

Marius had gone to the Luxembourg.

M. Leblanc and the young lady were there already. Marius approached as near to them as he could, pretending to read his book, but he still kept a long distance off, and then returned and sat down on his bench, where he spent four hours in watching the sparrows, which he fancied were making fun of him, hopping about in the walk.

A fortnight passed in this way. Marius no longer went to the Luxembourg to walk, but always to sit down at the same spot, without knowing why. When he had arrived there, he did not stir. He put on his new coat every morning, did not show himself, and began again on the morrow.

She was decidedly a marvellous beauty. The sole remark resembling a criticism that could be made, was, that the contradiction between her glance, which was sad, and her smile, which was joyous, gave her face a slightly startled look, which sometimes made the gentle countenance become strange without ceasing to be charming.

CHAPTER VI

TAKEN PRISONER

ON one of the last days of the second week, Marius was, as usual, seated on his bench, holding in his hand an open book, in which he had not turned a page for the last two hours, when he suddenly started,—an event was occurring at the end of the walk. M. Leblanc and the girl had left their bench, the girl had taken her father's arm, and both were moving slowly toward the middle of the walk where Marius was. He shut his book, then opened it again and tried to read. He trembled. The glory came straight toward him.

"Oh, heavens!" he thought, "I shall not have time to strike an attitude." The white-haired man and the girl, however, advanced; it seemed to him as if this lasted a century, and that it was only a second. "What do they want here?" he asked himself. "What! will she pass here; will her feet tread this sand, this walk, two paces from me?" He was quite upset, he longed to be very handsome, and to have the cross of the Legion of Honour. He heard the soft, measured sound of their footsteps approaching him, and he imagined that M. Leblanc was darting an angry glance at him. "Is that gentleman going to speak to me?" he thought. He hung his head, and when he raised it again, they were close to him. The girl passed; and as she passed, she looked at him,—looked at him intently, with a thoughtful sweetness which thrilled Marius from head to foot. It seemed to him as if she were reproaching him for keeping away from her so long, and were saying, "I have come to you instead." Marius was dazzled by those eyes full of sunbeams and abysses.

He felt that his brain was on fire. She had come toward him, what joy! and then, she had looked at him. She appeared to him lovelier than he had ever seen her,—lovely with a beauty at once feminine and angelic; a perfect beauty, which would have made Petrarch sing and Dante kneel. He felt as if he were floating in the blue sky; but at the same time he was horribly annoyed because he had dust on his boots.

He felt sure that she had looked at his boots, too.

He looked after her till she disappeared. Then he started up and walked about the garden like a maniac. He probably at times laughed to himself and talked aloud. He was so dreamy when he got among the nurse-girls that each of them fancied him in love with her.

He left the Luxembourg in hopes of seeing her in the street.

He met Courfeyrac under the arches of the Pantheon, and said to him, "Come and dine with me." They went to Rousseau's and spent six francs. Marius ate like an ogre, and gave six sous to the waiter. After dinner he said to Courfeyrac

rac: "Have you read the papers? What a fine speech Audry de Puyraveau made!"

He was desperately in love.

Then he said to Courfeyrac: "Let us go to the theatre; I'll pay." They went to the Porte St. Martin to see Frederick Lemaître in the "Auberge des Adrets," and Marius was mightily amused.

At the same time, he became shyer than ever. On leaving the theatre he refused to look at the garter of a dress-maker who was skipping across a gutter; and Courfeyrac happening to say, "I should like to add that woman to my collection," he felt almost horrified.

Courfeyrac invited him to breakfast next morning, at the Café Voltaire. He went, and ate even more than on the previous evening. He was very thoughtful and very gay, and seemed to take every opportunity to laugh uproariously. A party of students collected round the table and talked of the absurdities, paid for by the State, which are produced from the pulpit of the Sorbonne, and then the conversation turned on the faults and omissions in Guichérat's dictionaries and grammars. Marius interrupted the discussion by exclaiming: "And yet it is very agreeable to have the cross of the Legion."

"That is funny!" Courfeyrac whispered to Jean Prouvaire.

"No, it is serious," the other answered.

It was, indeed, serious. Marius had reached that startling and charming hour with which great passions begin.

A look had effected all this.

When the mine is loaded, when the fire is ready, nothing is more simple. A glance is a spark.

It was all over. Marius loved a woman, and his destiny was entering the unknown.

The glance of a woman resembles certain combinations of wheels which are apparently gentle, but are formidable. You daily pass them with impunity, and without suspecting anything, and a moment comes when you even forget that the

thing is there. You come, you go, you dream, you speak, you laugh. All at once you are yourself caught, and it is all over with you. The wheels hold you fast. The glance has caught you; it has caught, no matter where or how, by some part of your thought which dragged behind you, or by some inattention on your part. You are lost. Your whole body is drawn in. A series of mysterious forces seize you, and you struggle in vain; human aid is no longer possible. You pass from cog-wheel to cog-wheel, from agony to agony, from torture to torture,—you and your mind, your fortune, your future, and your soul; and, according as you are in the power of a wicked creature or of a noble heart, you will issue from this frightful machinery either disfigured by shame or transfigured by passion.

CHAPTER VII

ADVENTURES OF THE LETTER U LEFT TO CONJECTURE

ISOLATION, detachment from everything, pride, independence, a taste for Nature, the absence of daily and material labour, life within himself, the secret struggles of chastity, and his benevolent ecstasy toward all creation, had prepared Marius for that possession which is called passion. His reverence for his father had gradually become a religion, and like all religions, withdrew into the depths of his soul; something was wanting for the foreground. Love came.

A whole month passed, during which Marius went daily to the Luxembourg. When the hour came, nothing could stop him. "He is on duty," said Courfeyrac. Marius lived in a state of transport. It is certain that the young lady looked at him.

At last he grew bolder, and went nearer the bench. Still, he did not pass in front of it any more, obeying at once the

timid and the prudent instinct of lovers. He thought it advisable not to attract the father's attention, and hence arranged his stations behind trees and the pedestals of statues, with profound Machiavelism, so that he might be seen as much as possible by the young lady and as little as possible by the old gentleman. Sometimes he would stand for half an hour motionless in the shadow of some Leonidas or Spartacus, a book in his hand, over which his eyes, gently raised, sought the lovely girl; and she, for her part, turned her charming profile toward him with a vague smile. While talking most naturally and quietly with the white-haired man, she fixed upon Marius all the reveries of a virginal and impassioned eye. It is an old and time-honoured trick which Eve knew from the first day of the world, and which every woman knows from the first day of her life. Her mouth replied to the one and her eye answered the other.

It must be supposed, however, that M. Leblanc finally noticed something; for frequently, when Marius came, he got up and began to walk about. He left their accustomed seat, and adopted the bench close to the Gladiator at the other end of the walk, as if to see whether Marius would follow them. Marius did not understand, and committed that mistake. "The father" began to become unpunctual, and no longer brought his "daughter" every day. Sometimes he came alone, and then Marius did not stay. This was another mistake.

Marius paid no attention to these symptoms; from the timid phase he had passed by a natural and fatal progress to a blind phase. His love grew. He dreamed of it every night. And then an unexpected happiness occurred to him, like oil on the fire, redoubling the darkness over his eyes. One evening, at twilight, he found on the bench which "M. Leblanc and his daughter" had just quitted, a simple, unembroidered handkerchief, which, however, was white and fine, and seemed to him to exhale ineffable odours. He seized it with transport. It was marked with the letters U. F. Marius knew nothing about the lovely girl, neither her family,

her name, nor her abode. These two letters were the first thing of hers of which he had gained possession,—adorable initials, upon which he at once began to erect his scaffolding. U was evidently the Christian name: “Ursula!” he thought. “What a delicious name!” He kissed the handkerchief, breathed it in, placed it on his heart, next his skin during the day, and at night laid it on his lips to lull him to sleep.

“I can feel her whole soul in it!” he exclaimed.

This handkerchief belonged to the old gentleman, who had simply let it fall from his pocket.

On the days following the finding of this treasure, Marius only appeared at the Luxembourg in the act of kissing the handkerchief and pressing it to his heart. The lovely girl did not understand what this meant, and expressed her surprise by imperceptible signs.

“O modesty!” said Marius.

CHAPTER VIII

EVEN VETERANS MAY BE HAPPY

SINCE we have uttered the word *modesty*, and since we conceal nothing, we are bound to say, however, that on one occasion “his Ursula” caused him serious vexation in the midst of his ecstasy. It was on one of the days when she induced M. Leblanc to leave the bench and stroll about. There **was** a sharp spring breeze, which shook the tops of the plane-trees; and father and daughter, arm-in-arm, had just passed Marius, who rose and watched them, as was fitting for a man in his desperate state.

All at once a puff of wind more merry than the rest and probably ordered to do the business of spring, dashed along the walk, enveloped the maiden in a delicious shiver worthy of the nymphs of Virgil and the fauns of Theocritus, and raised

her dress,—that dress more sacred than that of Isis,—almost as high as her garter. A leg of exquisite shape became visible. Marius saw it. He was exasperated and furious.

The maiden rapidly put down her dress, with a divinely startled movement; but he was none the less indignant. He was alone in the walk, it is true. But there might have been somebody there; and what if there had been somebody there! Is such a thing conceivable? What she has just done is horrible! Alas! The poor girl had done nothing, and there was only one culprit, the wind; but Marius, in whom quivered the Bartholo who exists in Cherubino, was determined to be dissatisfied, and was jealous of his own shadow. It is thus, in fact, that the strange and bitter jealousy of the flesh awakens in the human heart, and dominates it, even unjustly. Besides, apart from his jealousy, the sight of that charming leg was not at all agreeable to him, and any other woman's white stocking would have caused him more pleasure.

When "his Ursula," having reached the end of the walk, turned back with M. Leblanc, and passed the bench on which Marius was sitting, he gave her a sullen, savage look. The girl drew herself up slightly, and raised her eyelids, which means, "Well, what is the matter now?"

This was their "first quarrel."

Marius had scarce finished upbraiding her in this way with his eyes, when some one crossed the walk. It was a bent veteran, very much wrinkled, and very pale, wearing the uniform of Louis XV., on his breast the little oval patch of red cloth with the crossed swords, the soldier's cross of St. Louis, and, in addition, decorated with a coat-sleeve in which there was no arm, a silver chin, and a wooden leg. Marius fancied that that man had an extremely satisfied air. It seemed to him that the old cynic, as he hobbled past him, gave him a fraternal and extremely jovial wink, as if some accident had created an understanding between them, and as though they had enjoyed some good thing together. Why was this relic of Mars so pleased? What had passed between this wooden leg and the other? Marius went into a paroxysm of jealousy.

"Perhaps he was there," he said to himself; "perhaps he saw." And he longed to exterminate the veteran.

With the help of time, every point grows blunt; and Marius's anger with "Ursula," though so just and legitimate, passed away. He ended by pardoning her, but it was a mighty effort; and he sulked for three days.

Still, in spite of all this, and because of all this, his passion increased, and grew to madness.

CHAPTER IX

ECLIPSE

WE have seen how Marius discovered, or thought he had discovered, that she was named Ursula.

Appetite comes with loving; and to know that her name was Ursula was a great deal, but it was little. In three or four weeks Marius had devoured this happiness and craved another. He wanted to know where she lived.

He had made one mistake in falling into the trap of the bench by the Gladiator; he had committed a second by not remaining at the Luxembourg when M. Leblanc went there alone; and he now committed a third, an immense one,— he followed "Ursula."

She lived in the Rue de l'Ouest, in the most isolated part, in a new three-story house of modest appearance.

From this moment, Marius added to his happiness of seeing her at the Luxembourg the happiness of following her home.

His hunger increased; he knew her name, her Christian name at least, a charming name, a true woman's name; he knew where she lived: he now wanted to know who she was.

One evening, after following them home and watching them disappear through the gate-way, he went in after them, and boldly addressed the porter:—

"Is that the gentleman who lives on the first-floor, who just went in?"

"No," answered the porter; "it was the gentleman on the third-floor."

Another step gained! This success emboldened Marius.

"Front?" he asked.

"Hang it!" said the porter, "our rooms are all front rooms."

"And what is the gentleman's business?" went on Marius.

"He lives on his income. He is a very kindly man, who does a deal of good to the unfortunate, though he is not rich."

"What is his name?" added Marius.

The porter looked up and said: —

"Are you a detective?"

Marius went off much abashed, but highly delighted, for he was progressing.

"Good!" he thought: "I know that her name is Ursula, that she is the daughter of a retired gentleman, and that she lives there, on the third-floor, in the Rue de l'Ouest."

On the morrow, M. Leblanc and his daughter made but a short stay at the Luxembourg, and went away in broad daylight. Marius followed them to the Rue de l'Ouest, as was his habit; and on reaching the gate-way, M. Leblanc made his daughter go in first, then stopped, turned, and looked intently at Marius.

Next day they did not come to the Luxembourg, and Marius waited in vain the whole day.

At nightfall he went to the Rue de l'Ouest, and saw a light in the third-floor windows.

He walked about beneath those windows till the light was extinguished.

The next day there was no one at the Luxembourg; Marius waited all day, and then went and kept night-watch under the windows.

This took up his time till ten o'clock, and his dinner took care of itself. Fever nourishes the sick man, and love the lover.

A week passed in this way. M. Leblanc and his daughter did not again appear at the Luxembourg.

Marius indulged in sorrowful conjectures. He dared not watch the gate-way by day; he contented himself with going at night to contemplate the red glow of the window-panes. He saw shadows flit across them now and then, and his heart beat.

On the eighth day, when he arrived beneath the windows, there was no light. "What!" he said to himself, "the lamp is not lighted; can they have gone out?" He waited till ten o'clock, till midnight, till one o'clock; but no light appeared in the third-floor windows, and nobody entered the house.

He went away in a very melancholy mood.

On the morrow — for he only lived from morrow to morrow, and he had no to-day, so to speak — he saw nobody at the Luxembourg; he had expected that. At nightfall he went to the house.

There was no light in the windows, the shutters were closed, and the third-floor was dark.

Marius rapped, walked in, and said to the porter: —

"The gentleman on the third-floor?"

"Moved," answered the porter.

Marius staggered, and asked feebly: —

"Since when?"

"Yesterday."

"Where is he living now?"

"I do not know."

"Then he did not leave his new address?"

"No."

And the porter, looking up, recognized Marius.

"What! it's you, is it?" he said. "Why, you really must be a detective!"

BOOK VII

PATRON-MINETTE

CHAPTER I

MINES AND MINERS

HUMAN societies all have what is called in theatrical parlance, "the third-floor below." The social soil is everywhere undermined,—here for good and there for evil. These works are superimposed one upon the other. There are upper mines and lower mines. There is a top and a bottom in this obscure subsoil, which sometimes gives way beneath the weight of civilization, and which our indifference and carelessness trample under foot. The Encyclopædia, in the last century, was a mine almost open to the sky. Darkness—that gloomy brooder of primitive Christianity—only awaited an opportunity to explode beneath the Cæsars and to inundate the human race with light; for in the sacred darkness there is latent light. Volcanoes are full of a shadow which is capable of flashing forth. Every spectre begins by being night. The catacombs in which the first Mass was read were not merely the cellar of Rome, but also the vaults of the world.

There are excavations of all sorts beneath that complicated marvel, the social structure. There is the religious mine, the philosophic mine, the political mine, the social economic mine, and the revolutionary mine. One man uses the idea as a pick-axe; another uses ciphers; another, anger; and they hail and answer each other from one catacomb to another. Utopias

move beneath the surface in the sewers, and ramify in all directions. They sometimes meet there and fraternize. Jean Jacques lends his pick to Diogenes, who lends him his lantern in turn. Sometimes, though, they fight, and Calvin clutches Socinus by the hair. But nothing arrests or interrupts the tension of all their energies toward the goal, and the vast simultaneous activity which comes and goes, ascends, descends, and re-ascends in the darkness, and which slowly substitutes top for bottom, and inside for out; it is like an immense and unknown ant-hill. Society hardly suspects this excavation, which leaves no trace upon its surface, and yet changes its interior organs. There are as many different works as there are varying excavations or subterranean adits. What issues from all these deep excavations? The future.

The deeper we go, the more mysterious the miners become. Up to a certain point which the social philosopher is able to recognize, the work is good; beyond that point, it is doubtful and mixed; lower still, it becomes terrible. At a certain depth the excavations can no longer be penetrated by the spirit of civilization, and man's limit of breathing is passed: a beginning of monsters becomes possible.

The downward ladder is a strange one; and each rung corresponds with a stage upon which philosophy may find foothold, and where we may meet one of these miners, who are sometimes divine, sometimes deformed. Below John Huss, there is Luther; below Luther, Descartes; below Descartes, Voltaire; below Voltaire, Condorcet; below Condorcet, Robespierre; below Robespierre, Marat; and below Marat, Babeuf.

And so it goes on. Lower still, we note confusedly, at the limit which divides the indistinct and the invisible, other gloomy men, who perhaps do not exist as yet. Those of yesterday are spectres; those of the morrow, grubs. The mental eye can only distinguish them dimly. The embryonic labour of the future is one of the visions of the philosopher.

A world in limbo,—in the fœtus state. What an unprecedented picture!

Saint Simon, Owen, and Fourier are also there in the side-galleries.

Surely, although a divine and invisible chain, without their cognizance, links all the subterranean pioneers, who nearly always fancy themselves isolated, but are not so, their labours vary greatly, and the light of some contrasts with the blaze of others; some are paradisaic, and others tragical. Still, however great the contrast may be, all these labourers, from the highest to the most nocturnal, from the wisest down to the maddest, are alike in their disinterestedness. Marat forgets himself, like Jesus. They set self aside, omit themselves, do not think of themselves. They see something different from themselves. They have a glance, and that glance seeks the absolute. The first has heaven in his eyes; the last, however enigmatical he may be, has still beneath his brow the pale light of the infinite. Venerate every man, no matter what he may be doing, who has this sign,—a starry eye.

The shadowy eye is the other sign.

With it evil begins.

Reflect and tremble in the presence of the man who does not look you in the face. The social order has its black miners.

There is a point where profundity is burial, and where light is extinct.

Below all these mines which we have described; below all these galleries, below all this immense, subterranean, venous system of progress and Utopia,—far deeper in the ground: below Marat; below Babeuf; much, much lower,—there is the last passage, which has no connection with the upper drifts. It is a fearful spot. It is what we termed the “third-floor below.”

It is the grave of darkness; it is the cellar of the blind.
Inferi.

It communicates with the abyss.

CHAPTER II

THE LOWEST DEPTH.

HERE disinterestedness dies. The demon is vaguely revealed. Every one for himself. The blind *ego* yells, seeks, gropes, and gnaws. The social Ugolino exists in this gulf.

The fierce shadows which prowl about this grave, almost brutes, almost phantoms, do not trouble themselves about universal progress; they know neither the idea nor the word; they care for nought beyond individual gratification. They are almost unconscious, and there is within them a sort of frightful obliteration. They have two mothers, both step-mothers, Ignorance and Misery. Necessity is their guide, and appetite their only form of satisfaction; they are brutally voracious,—that is to say, ferocious; not after the fashion of the tyrant, but of the tiger. From suffering, these spectres pass to crime,—fatal affiliation, ghastly propagation, the logic of darkness. That which crawls in the social third-floor below is no longer the stifled demand of the absolute, but the protest of matter. Man becomes a dragon; his starting-point is hunger and thirst, and his terminus is Satan. Lacenaire issued from this vault.

We have just seen in Book Fourth, one of the compartments of the upper mine,—the great political, revolutionary, and philosophic excavation. There, as we said, all is noble, pure, dignified and honest. Men may be mistaken there, and are mistaken, but the error must be revered, because it implies so much heroism; and the work performed there has a name,—Progress.

The time has now come to take a glance at other and hideous depths.

There is beneath society, we repeat, and there ever will be,

till that day when ignorance is dissipated, the great cavern of evil.

This cavern is below all, and the enemy of all; it is hatred, without exception. This cavern knows no philosophers, and its dagger never cut a pen, while its blackness bears no relation to the sublime blackness of the inkstand. The fingers of night, which contract beneath this asphyxiating roof, have never opened a book or unfolded a newspaper. Babeuf is a speculator to Cartouche; and Marat is an aristocrat to Schinderhannes. The object of this cavern is to overthrow everything.

Everything,—including the upper levels which it execrates. It not only undermines in its hideous labour the actual social order, it undermines philosophy, science, law, human thought, civilization, revolution, and progress. Its name is simply robbery, prostitution, murder, and assassination. It is darkness, and it desires chaos. Its roof is made of ignorance.

All the other mines above it have but one object,—to suppress it. Philosophy and progress strive for this, with all their organs simultaneously, by their amelioration of the real as well as their contemplation of the ideal. Destroy the cave, Ignorance, and you destroy the mole, Crime.

Let us condense in a few words a portion of what we have just written.

The sole social evil is darkness; humanity is identity, for all men are made of the same clay. In this nether world, at least, there is no difference in predestination. The same shadow before, the same flesh in the present, and the same ashes afterward. But ignorance, mixed with the human paste, blackens it. This incurable blackness takes possession of man and becomes Evil.

CHAPTER III

BABET, GUEULEMER, CLAQUESOUS, AND MONTPARNASSE

A QUARTET of bandits, Babet, Gueulemer, Claquesous, and Montparnasse governed the lowest depths of Paris from 1830 to 1835.

Gueulemer was a Hercules out of place, and his den was the Arche-Marion sewer. He was six feet tall, his pectoral muscles were of marble, his biceps of bronze, his lungs were cavernous, his bust that of a colossus, and his skull that of a bird. You fancied you saw the Farnèse Hercules, attired in ticking trousers and a velveteen jacket. Gueulemer, built in this mould, might have subdued monsters; but he had found it easier to be one. A low forehead, wide temples, under forty years of age, yet with crows' feet, rough, short hair, and a bushy beard,—you can see the man. His muscles demanded work, and his stupidity would not accept it. He was a great, unoccupied force, an assassin from indifference. People believed him to be a Creole; and he probably had some part in the massacre of Marshal Brune, as he was a porter at Avignon in 1815. From that stage, he had turned robber.

Babet's transparency contrasted with the flesh of Gueulemer; he was thin and learned,—transparent but impenetrable. You might see daylight through his bones, but not through his eyes. He called himself a chemist. He had been a 'Billy Barlow' with Bobèche, a clown with Bobino, and had played in light comedy at St. Mihiel. He was a man of intentions, a fine speaker, who underlined his smiles, and placed his gestures between inverted commas. His trade was to sell, in the open air, plaster busts and portraits of the "chief of the State;" and, in addition to this, he pulled teeth. He had exhibited phenomena at fairs, and possessed a booth with a trumpet and the following show-board,—“Babet, dentist, and Member of the Academies, performs physical experiments on

metals and metalloids, extirpates teeth, and undertakes stumps given up by the profession. Terms: one tooth, one franc fifty centimes; two teeth, two francs; three teeth, two francs fifty centimes. Take advantage of this opportunity." (The last sentence meant, have as many teeth pulled out as possible.) He was married and had children, but did not know what had become of wife or children. He had lost them, just as another man loses his handkerchief. Babet was a striking exception in the obscure world to which he belonged, for he read the newspapers. One day, when he still had his family with him in his caravan, he read in the "Moniteur" that a woman had just been delivered of a child with a calf's snout, and he exclaimed: "There's a fortune! My wife never had the sense to produce me a child like that!"

Since then, he had given up everything else to "undertake Paris,"—the expression is his own.

What was Claquesous? He was night, and never showed himself till the sky was bedaubed with blackness. In the evening he emerged from a hole, to which he returned before daybreak. Where was this hole? No one knew. In the greatest darkness, and when alone with his accomplices, he turned his back when he spoke to them. Was his name Claquesous? No. He said, "My name is Not-at-all." If a candle were brought, he put on a mask. He was a ventriloquist. Babet used to say, "Claquesous is a night-bird with two voices." Claquesous was vague, terrible, and a roamer; no one was sure that he had a name, for Claquesous was a nickname; no one was sure that he had a voice, for his stomach spoke more frequently than his mouth; and no one was sure that he had a face, as nothing had ever been seen but his mask. He disappeared like a ghost; and when he appeared he seemed to issue from the ground.

Montparnasse was a melancholy creature. He was a lad not yet twenty, with a pretty face, lips like cherries, beautiful black hair, and the light of springtime in his eyes; he had every vice, and aspired to every crime. The digestion of evil gave him an appetite for worse. He was the gutter-snipe

turned pickpocket, and the pickpocket turned garroter. He was genteel, effeminate, graceful, robust, soft, and ferocious. The brim of his hat was turned up on the left side, to make room for a tuft of hair, in the style of 1829. He lived by robbery committed with violence. His coat was cut in the latest fashion, though worn at the seams. Montparnasse was a fashion plate, in a state of want, and committing murders. The cause of all this young man's wickedness was a longing to be well dressed; the first grisette who said to him, "You are handsome," put the black spot in his heart, and made a Cain of this Abel. Finding himself good-looking, he wished to be elegant. Now, the height of elegance is idleness; but idleness in a poor man is crime. Few toughs were so dreaded as Montparnasse, and at the age of eighteen he had several corpses behind him. More than one wayfarer lay in the shadow of this villain, with outstretched arms, and with his face in a pool of blood. Curled, pomaded, with his waist pinched in, the hips of a woman, the bust of a Prussian officer, a buzz of admiration from the girls of the boulevard surrounding him, a knowingly knotted cravat, a slung-shot in his pocket, and a flower in his button-hole,—such was this dandy of the tomb.

CHAPTER IV

COMPOSITION OF THE COMPANY

THESE four ruffians formed a sort of Proteus, winding like a serpent through the police ranks, and striving to escape the indiscreet glances of Vidocq "under various forms, tree, flame, and fountain," borrowing each other's names and tricks, asylums for one another, laying aside their personality as a man removes a false nose at a masquerade; sometimes simplifying matters so as to be only one man, again multiplying themselves to such an extent that Coco-Latour himself took them for a mob.

These four men were not four men; they were a sort of four-headed robber, working Paris on a grand scale,—the monstrous polyp of evil inhabiting the crypt of society.

Thanks to their ramifications, and to the net-work underlying their relations, Babet, Gueulemer, Claquesous, and Montparnasse, had the general direction of all the ambush work in the department of the Seine. The inventors of ideas in this style,—the men with nocturnal imaginations,—applied to them to execute their ideas; the four villains were furnished with the canvas, and they undertook to produce the scenery. They prepared the stage setting. They were always in a position to supply a proportionate and proper staff of men for every robbery which was sufficiently lucrative and required a stout arm. If a crime were in want of persons to carry it out, they sublet the accomplices; and they always had a band of actors at the service of all the tragedies of the caverns.

They generally met at nightfall,—the hour when they awoke,—on the plains that border the Salpêtrière. There they conferred, and, as they had the twelve dark hours before them, they settled their employment accordingly.

Patron-Minette was the name given in the subterranean lurking-places to the association of these four men. In old and fantastic popular slang, which is daily dying out, *Patron-Minette* signifies morning, just as *entre chien et loup* (“between dog and wolf”) signifies dusk. This appellation was probably derived from the hour when their work ended; for dawn is the moment for spectres to vanish, and for bandits to part. These four men were known by this title. When the president of the Assizes visited Lacenaire in prison, he questioned him about a crime which the murderer denied. “Who committed it?” the president asked; and Lacenaire gave this answer, which was enigmatical to the magistrate, but plain to the police, “Perhaps it was Patron-Minette.”

The plot of a play may sometimes be divined from the list of characters; and a party of bandits may, perhaps, be judged in the same way. Here are the names to which the principal

members of Patron-Minette answered, as they survive in special memoirs:—

Panchaud, *alias* Printanier, *alias* Bigrenaille.

Brujon (there was a dynasty of Brujons, about whom we may still say a word).

Boulatruelle, the road-mender, whom we have already seen.

Laveuve (the Widow).

Finistère.

Homer-Hogu, a negro.

Tuesday-night.

Make-haste.

Fauntleroy, *alias* the Flower-girl.

Glorious, a discharged convict.

Stop-the-coach, *alias* Monsieur Dupont.

The Southern Esplanade.

Poussàgrive.

Carmagnolet.

Kruideniers, *alias* Bizarro.

Lace-eater.

Feet-in-the-air.

Demi-Liard, *alias* Two Millions, etc.

We pass over some, and not the worst.

These names have faces, and express not merely beings but species. Each of these names corresponds to a variety of those poisonous fungi which grow on the underside of civilization.

These beings, not very lavish of their faces, were not of those whom we see in the street by day. During the day, wearied with their wild nights, they went off to sleep in the limekilns, the deserted quarries of Montmartre or Montrouge, or even in the sewers. They ran to earth.

What has become of these men? They still exist, and have always existed. Horace alludes to them in his "*Ambubaia-
rum collegia, pharmaco-polæ, mendici, mimiæ;*" and so as long as society is what it is, they will be what they are. Under the obscure roof of their cellar, they are constantly born again from the social leakage. They return as spectres, but

ever identical; the only difference is that they no longer bear the same names, and are no longer in the same skins.

Individuals are extirpated; the tribe subsists.

They have always the same faculties, and from beggar to tramp, the race ever remains pure. They guess at purses in pockets, and scent out watches in fobs. Gold and silver have a peculiar smell for them. There are simple cits of whom we might say that they have a "robbable" look. These men patiently follow those cits. When a foreigner or a countryman passes, they quiver like a spider in its web.

These men, when we catch a glimpse of them upon a deserted boulevard at midnight, are frightful; they do not seem to be men, but forms made of living fog. We might say that they habitually form a part of the darkness, that they are in no way distinct from it, that they have no other soul than shadow, and that they are detached from night only momentarily, and in order to live a monstrous life for a few moments.

What is required to make these phantoms vanish? Light, floods of light. Not a single bat can resist the dawn. Light up the lower strata of society.

BOOK VIII

THE WICKED POOR

CHAPTER I

A MAN'S CAP INSTEAD OF A GIRL'S BONNET

SUMMER passed away, then autumn; winter came. Neither M. Leblanc nor the young lady had again set foot in the Luxembourg. Marius had but one thought,—to see that sweet and adorable face once more. He sought it ever, he sought it everywhere, but found nothing. He was no longer Marius, the enthusiastic dreamer, the resolute, ardent, and firm man, the bold challenger of destiny, the brain that built up future upon future, the young mind encumbered with plans, projects, pride, ideas, and desires; he was a lost dog. He fell into a black melancholy. All was over; work disgusted him, walking fatigued him, and solitude wearied him. Mighty Nature, once so full of forms, brightness, voices, counsels, perspectives, horizons, teachings, now lay empty before him. He felt as if everything had disappeared.

He still thought, for he could not do otherwise; but he no longer took pleasure in his thoughts. To all that they proposed to him in whispers, he answered in his gloom: "To what end?"

He lavished a hundred reproaches upon himself. "Why did I follow her? I was so happy merely in seeing her! She looked at me, and was not that immense? She looked as if she loved me, and was not that everything? I wanted,

what? There is nothing beyond that. I was absurd. It is my own fault," etc., etc. Courfeyrac, to whom he confided nothing (that was his nature), but who guessed pretty nearly all (for that was his nature too), had begun by congratulating him on being in love, although he was amazed at it. Then, seeing Marius in this melancholy state, he ended by saying to him: "I see that you have simply been a donkey. Come to the Chaumière."

Once, putting confidence in a splendid September sun, Marius allowed himself to be taken to the ball at Sceaux by Courfeyrac, Bossuet, and Grantaire, hoping — what a dream! — that he might possibly find her there. Of course he did not see her whom he sought. "And yet this is the place where all lost women are found," Grantaire growled aside. Marius left his friends at the ball, and returned on foot, through the night, alone, tired, feverish, with sad and troubled eyes, stunned by the noise and dust of the vehicles filled with merry people singing and shouting on their way home from a holiday, and which passed him, as he in his discouragement, and in order to relieve his aching head, inhaled the acrid smell of the walnut-trees by the roadside.

He took to living more and more in solitude, crushed, given over to his inward anguish, going up and down in his pain like a wolf caught in a trap, seeking the absent one everywhere, and stupefied by love.

Another time, he had a meeting which produced a strange effect upon him. In the little streets adjoining the Boulevard des Invalides he passed a man dressed like a workman, and wearing a deep-peaked cap, under which white locks peered out. Marius was struck by the beauty of this white hair, and looked at the man, who was walking slowly and as if absorbed in painful meditation. Strange to say, he thought that he recognized M. Leblanc; it was the same hair, the same profile, so far as the cap allowed him to see, and the same mien, though somewhat more melancholy. But why this workman's clothing? What was the meaning of this disguise? Marius was greatly surprised; and when he recovered himself, his first

impulse was to follow this man. Who knows whether he had not at last the clew which he had so long been seeking; at any rate, he must have a close look at the man and clear up the enigma. But he hit on this idea too late, for the man was no longer there. He had turned into some side street, and Marius was unable to find him again. This meeting troubled him for some days, and then faded away. "After all," he said to himself, "it was probably only a resemblance."

CHAPTER II

MARIUS FINDS SOMETHING

MARIUS still lived at No. 50-52, but he paid no attention to his fellow-lodgers.

At this period, in truth, there were no other tenants in the house but himself and those Jondrettes whose rent he had once paid, without ever having spoken to father, mother, or daughters. The other lodgers had moved away, were dead, or turned out for not paying their rent.

One day, during that winter, the sun had shown itself a little in the afternoon; but it was February 2, that old Candlemas Day, whose treacherous sun, the precursor of a six weeks' frost, inspired Matthew Laensberg with these two lines, which have justly become classic:—

"If the sun shines on Candlemas Day,
The bear will go back to his cavern, they say."

Marius had just left his cavern, for night was falling. It was time to dine; for he had been obliged to take to dining again, such is the infirmity of ideal passions.

He had just crossed his threshold, which Ma'am Bougon was at that very moment sweeping, as she uttered the memorable soliloquy:—

"What is there that is cheap now? Everything is dear. Nothing in the world but trouble is cheap, and that may be had for nothing!"

Marius walked slowly along the boulevard, in the direction of the Rue St. Jacques. He walked thoughtfully with hanging head.

All at once he felt himself elbowed in the fog. He turned and saw two girls in rags, one tall and slim, the other not quite so tall, who passed hurriedly, panting, frightened, and as if running away; they were coming toward him, and, not seeing him, ran against him as they passed. Marius noticed in the twilight their livid faces, uncovered heads, dishevelled hair, their ragged petticoats, and bare feet. As they ran they talked together and the elder said in a very low voice:—

"The cops came, and nearly nabbed me."

And the other answered: "I saw them, and so I bolted, bolted, bolted."

In spite of this repulsive slang, Marius understood that the police had nearly caught the two girls, and that they had managed to escape.

They disappeared among the trees behind him, and for a few minutes produced a sort of vague whiteness in the darkness, then vanished.

Marius had stopped for a moment, and was just going on, when he saw a small grayish packet lying at his feet. He stooped and picked it up; it was a sort of envelope, apparently containing papers.

"Why," said he, "those poor girls must have dropped it."

He turned back and called to them, but could not find them. He thought they must be some distance off, so he thrust the parcel into his pocket and went to dinner.

On his way he saw, in a lane leading off the Rue Mouffetard, a child's coffin, covered with a black pall, laid on three chairs, and illumined by a candle. The two girls in the twilight returned to his mind.

"Poor mothers!" he thought; "there is something even

sadder than to see one's children die; it is to see them lead evil lives."

Then these shadows, which had varied his melancholy, passed from his thoughts, and he fell back into his usual reflections. He began to think of his six months of love and happiness in the open air and broad daylight under the glorious Luxembourg trees.

"How sad my life has become!" he said to himself. "Girls constantly appear to me; but formerly they were angels, and now they are ghouls."

CHAPTER III

QUADRIFRONS

AT night, as he undressed to go to bed, he found in his coat-pocket the parcel which he had picked up in the boulevard. He had forgotten it. He thought that it would be as well to open it, as the packet might contain the girls' address, if it belonged to them, or in any case the information necessary to restore it to the person to whom it belonged.

He opened the envelope, which was not sealed, and which contained four letters, also unsealed.

The addresses were on all four, and they exhaled a frightful odour of tobacco.

The first letter was addressed to "Madame, Madame la Marquise de Grucheray, on the Square opposite the Chamber of Deputies."

Marius said to himself that he should probably find the information he wanted; and as the letter was not sealed, he could read it without impropriety. It was drawn up as follows:—

MADAME LA MARQUISE,—The virtue of clemency and piety is that which unites society most closely. Move your Christian feelings, and

dain a glance of compassion at this unfortunate Spaniard, a victim to his loyalty and attachment to the sacred cause of legitimacy, who shed his blood, devoted aul his fortune to defend this cause, and is now in the greatest misery. He does not doubt that you, honored lady, will grant some assistance to preserve an existence extremely painful for a soldier of honor and education, covered with wounds, and he reckons before hand on the humanity which animates you, and the interest which your ladyship takes in so unhappy a nation. Their prayer will not be in vain, and their gratitude will retain her charming memory.

With the most respectful feelings, I have the honor to be, madame,
DON ALVARES,

Spanish captain of cavalry, a Royalist refugee in France, who is travelling for his country, and who wants the means to continue his journey.

No address was attached to the signature, but Marius hoped to find it in the second letter, of which the superscription was: "To Madame, Madame la Comtesse de Montvernet, No. 9 Rue Cassette." This is what Marius read:—

MY LADY CONTESE,—It is a unhappy mother of a family of six children, of which the youngest is only eight months old; I ill since my last confinement, deserted by my husband, and having no ressource in the world, the most frightful indijance.

Trusting in your ladyship, she has the honor to be, madame, with profound respect,

MRS. BALIZARD.

Marius turned to the third letter, which was, like the preceding, a begging petition, and he read,—

MONSIEUR PABOURGEOT, *Elector, wholesale dealer in caps, Rue St. Denis, at the corner of the Rue Aux-Fers:—*

I venture to adress this letter to you, to ask you to grant me the pretious favor of your sympathies, and to interest you in a literary man, who has just sent a drama to the Theatre Français. The subject is historical, and the scene takes place in Auvergne in the time of the empire. The style, I believe, is natural, laconic, and may possess some merit. There are couplets for singing at four places. The comic, the serious, and the unexpected elements are blended in it with a variety of characters, and a tinge of romance is lightly spread through the whole plot, which moves misteriously, and the finale takes place amid several brilliant tableaux. My principal desire is to satsisfy the desire which progressively animates sosisety; that is to say, fashion,—that capritious and vague whirllig which changes with nearly every wind.

In spite of these qualities, I have reason to fear that jealousy and

the selfishness of privileged authors may obtain my exclusion from the stage; for I am not unaware of the vexation which is caused to newcomers.

Monsieur Pabourgeot, your just reputation as the enlightened protector of literary men, emboldens me to send you my daughter, who will explain to you our indigent situation,—wanting for bread and fire in this winter season. To tell you that I wish you to accept the homage which I desire to make to you of my drama, and all those that may succeed it, is to prove to you how much I desire the honor of sheltering myself under your ægis, and adorning my writings with your name. If you dain to honor me with the most modest offering, I will at once set to work writing a copy of verses, by which to pay you my debt of gratitude. These verses, which I will try to render as perfect as possible, will be sent to you before they are insirted in the beginning of the drama, and produced on the stage.

My most respectful homage to Monsieur and Madame Pabourgeot.

GENFLOT, *man of letters.*

P. S.— If it was only forty sous. I appologize for sending my daughter, and not paying my respects personally; but sad reasons of dress do not allow me, alas! to go out.

Marius then opened the last letter, which was addressed to “The Benevolent Gentleman of the Church of St. Jacques du Haut-pas;” and it contained the following lines:—

BENEVOLENT MAN,— If you will dain to accompany my daughter you will witness a misserable calamity, and I will show you my certificates.

At the sight of these dokuments your generous soul will be moved by a feeling of sensitive benevolence, for true philosophers always experience lively emotions.

Allow, compasionate man, that a man must experience the most cruel want, and that it is very painful to obtain any relief, by having it attested by the authorities, as if a man were not at liberty to suffer and die of inanicion, while waiting till our misery is releaved. Fate is too cruel to some, and too lavish or protecting for others. I await your presence or your offering, if you dain to make one, and I beg you to believe in the grateful feelings with which I have the honor of being, really magnanimous sir,

Your very humble and most obedient servant,

P. FABANTOU, *dramatic artist.*

After reading these four letters, Marius did not find himself much wiser than before.

In the first place, not one of the writers gave his address.

In the next, they appeared to come from four different individuals,— Don Alvares, Mrs. Balizard, Genflot the poet, and

Fabantou the dramatic artist; but the queer thing about these letters was, that they were all in the same handwriting.

What conclusion could be drawn from this, save that they came from the same person?

Moreover,—and this rendered the conjecture even more probable,—the paper, which was coarse and yellow, was the same for all four; the tobacco smell was the same; and though an attempt had evidently been made to vary the handwriting, the same mistakes in spelling were reproduced with the greatest composure, Genflot, the literary man, being no more exempt from them than the Spanish captain.

It was time thrown away to strive to read this riddle; and if it had not been a chance find, it would have looked like a hoax. Marius was too sad to take even a chance jest kindly, or to lend himself to a game which the street pavement appeared desirous to play with him. He felt as if he were playing at blind man's buff with these four letters and they were mocking him.

Besides, nothing indicated that these letters belonged to the girls whom Marius had met in the boulevard. After all, they were evidently papers of no value.

Marius returned them to the envelope, threw the lot into a corner, and went to bed.

At about seven in the morning, he had just risen and breakfasted, and was trying to set to work, when there came a gentle tap at the door.

As he possessed nothing, he never locked his door except very rarely, when he had a pressing job to finish. As a rule, even when out, he left the key in the lock. "You will be robbed," said Ma'am Bougon.

"Of what?" Marius asked. It is a fact, however, that one day a pair of old boots were stolen, to the great triumph of Ma'am Bougon.

There was a second knock, quite as gentle as the first.

"Come in," said Marius.

The door opened.

"What is it, Ma'am Bougon?" continued Marius, without

taking his eyes from the books and manuscripts on his table.

A voice, which was not Ma'am Bougon's, replied: "I beg your pardon, sir."

It was a hollow, cracked, hoarse, strangled voice,—the voice of an old man, roughened by dram-drinking and exposure to the cold.

Marius turned quickly and saw a girl.

CHAPTER IV

A ROSE IN WRETCHEDNESS

A VERY young girl stood in the half-open door. The garret window, through which the light fell, was exactly opposite the door, and threw upon her face a sallow gleam. She was a wretched, wan, emaciated creature, and had only a chemise and a petticoat to cover her shivering and frozen nudity. For waist-belt she had a piece of string, for head-dress another; pointed shoulders emerged from her chemise; she was of a lymphatic pallor, earthly collar-bones, hands red, mouth half open and depraved, some teeth gone, eyes dull, bold, and sunken. She had the form of an unfinished girl and the look of a corrupt old woman; fifty years blended with fifteen. She was one of those beings who are at once weak and horrible and who make those shudder whom they do not cause to weep.

Marius had risen, and was staring in a sort of stupor at this creature, who was almost like the shadows that traverse dreams.

What was the most heart-rending of all was, that this girl had not come into the world to be ugly. In her childhood she must even have been pretty. The grace of youth was still struggling with the hideous and premature senility of debauchery and poverty. A remnant of beauty was expiring

on that countenance of sixteen, like the pallid sun which dies out under frightful clouds at dawn on a winter's day.

The face was not absolutely strange to Marius, and he fancied that he had already seen it somewhere.

"What do you want, miss?" he asked.

The girl replied, with her drunken galley-slave's voice:

"A letter for you, Monsieur Marius."

She addressed him by name, and hence he could not doubt but that her business was with him; but who was this girl, and how did she know his name?

Without waiting for an invitation, she walked in; she walked in boldly, staring about with a sort of assurance that wrung the heart, at the whole room and the unmade bed. Her feet were bare. Large holes in her petticoat displayed her long legs and thin knees.

She was shivering, and held in her hand a letter, which she offered to Marius.

On opening the letter, he saw that the large clumsy wafer was still damp, which proved that the missive had not come a long distance. He read:—

MY AMIABLE NEIGHBOUR AND YOUNG SIR,—I have herd of your kindness to me, and that you paid my half-year's rent six months ago. I bless you for it, young sir. My eldest daughter will tell you that we have been without a morsel of bread for two days (four persons), and my wife ill. If I am not deceived in my opinion, I dare to hope that your generous heart will be affected by this statement, and will sudjest in you a desire to be propicious to me, by daining to lavish on me a trifling charity.

I am, with the distinguished consideration which is due to the benefactors of humanity,

JONDRETTE.

P. S.—My daughter will wait for your orders, my dear Monsieur Marius.

This letter, in the midst of the mysterious adventure which had been troubling Marius ever since the previous evening, was like a candle in a cellar; all was suddenly lit up.

This letter came from the same place as the other letters.

It was the same handwriting, the same style, the same orthography, the same paper, and the same tobacco smell.

Here were five letters, five stories, five names, five signatures and only one writer. The Spanish captain Don Alvares, the unhappy mother Balizard, the dramatic author Genflot, and the old comedian Fabantou were all four, Jondrette, if, indeed, Jondrette's name were really Jondrette.

During the lengthened period that Marius had inhabited this No. 50-52, he had, as we stated, but rare occasion to see, or even catch a glimpse of, his very low neighbours. His mind was elsewhere; and where the mind is, there the eyes are also. He must have passed the Jondrettes more than once in the passage and on the stairs, but they were to him merely shadows. He had paid so little attention to them, that on the previous evening he had run against the Jondrette girls on the boulevard without recognizing them,—for it was evidently they; and it was with great difficulty that the girl who had just entered the room aroused in him, in spite of his disgust and pity, a vague recollection of having met her somewhere before.

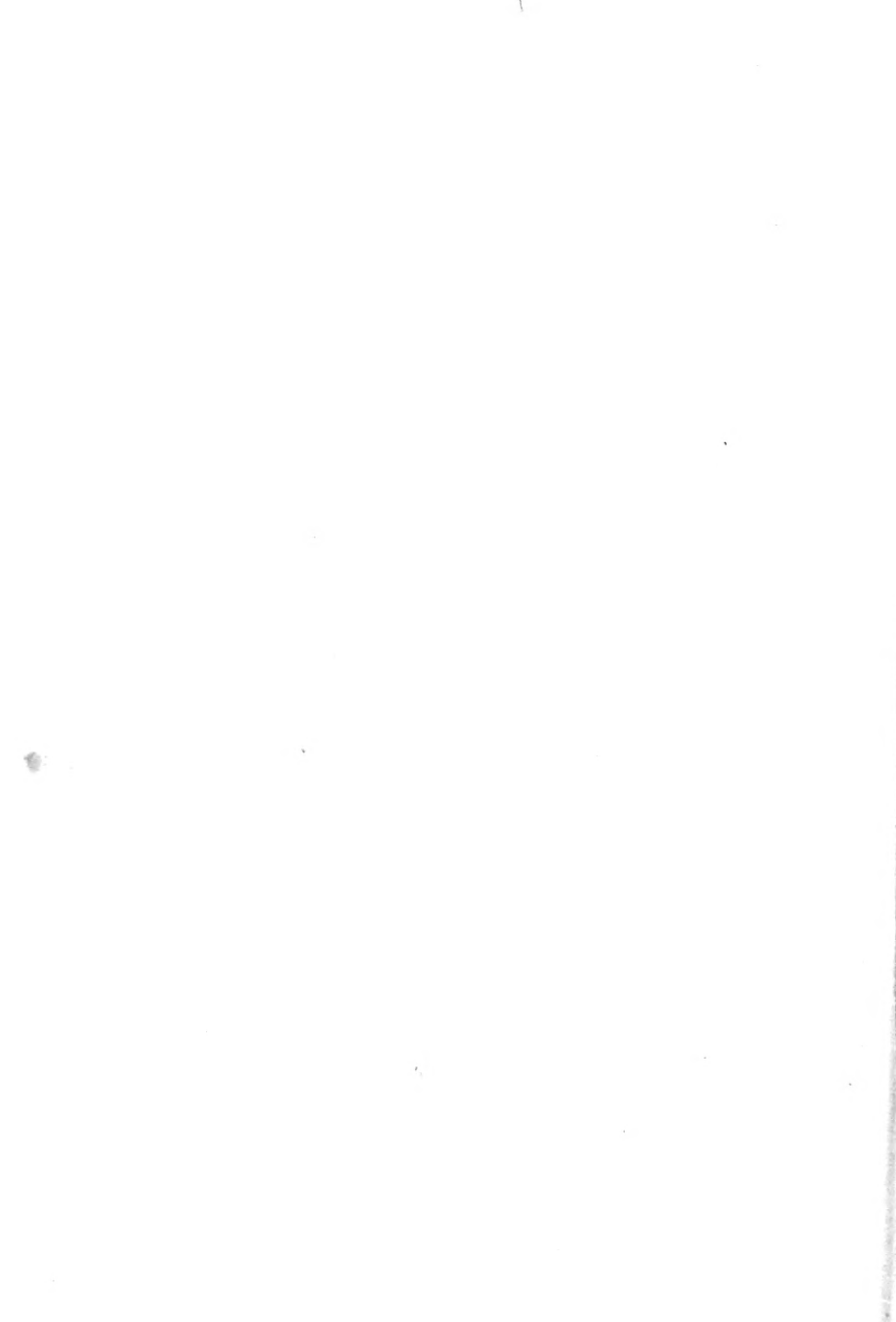
Now he saw everything clearly. He comprehended that his neighbour Jondrette had hit upon the trade, in his distress, of working upon the charity of benevolent persons; that he procured addresses, and wrote under supposititious names to people whom he supposed to be rich and charitable, letters which his children delivered at their risk and peril; for this father had come to such a pass that he hazarded his daughters. He was gambling with destiny, and he staked them. Marius comprehended that in all probability, judging from their flight on the previous evening, their panting, their terror, and the slang words which he overheard, these unfortunates carried on some other dark trades; and the result of all this was, in the midst of human society, as it is now constituted, two wretched beings, who were neither children nor girls nor women, but a species of impure and innocent monster,—the product of misery.

Melancholy beings, without age, name, or sex, to whom



"While Marius bent upon the girl a pained and astonished gaze, she walked about the garret with the boldness of a spectre.

Les Misérables. Marius: Page 183.



neither good nor evil is any longer possible, and who, on emerging from childhood have nothing left in the world, neither liberty nor virtue nor responsibility; souls that blossomed yesterday and are faded to-day, like the flowers that have fallen in the street, and are splashed with mud while waiting for a wheel to crush them.

While Marius bent upon the young girl a pained and astonished gaze, she walked about the garret with the boldness of a spectre, without troubling herself in the slightest degree about her state of nudity. Now and then her chemise, unfastened and torn, fell almost to her waist. She moved the chairs about, disturbed the toilet articles on the chest of drawers, examined Marius's clothes, and rummaged in every corner.

"Why," she said, "you have a looking-glass!"

And she hummed, as if she had been alone, bits of light comedy songs and wild refrains, which her guttural and hoarse voice rendered mournful.

But beneath this boldness there was an indescribable constraint, alarm, and humiliation. Effrontery is a disgrace.

Nothing could well be more sad than to see her flutter about the room with the movement of a bird startled by the daylight, or with broken wing. It was palpable that under other conditions of education and destiny the gay and free demeanor of this girl might have been something gentle and charming. Among animals, the creature born to be a dove is never changed into an osprey; that is only possible among men.

Marius was thinking, and left her alone. She walked up to the table.

"Ah!" said she; "books."

A gleam darted from her glassy eye; she continued, and her accent expressed that happiness which she felt in being able to boast of something, to which no human creature is insensible:—

"General Bauduin received orders to take the Château of Hougomont, which stands in the centre of the plain of Waterloo, with the five battalions of his brigade—"

"I know how to read, I do."

She quickly seized the book lying on the table, and read quite fluently:—

She broke off.

"Ah, Waterloo! I know all about that. It was a battle long ago. My father was there. He served in the army. We are thorough Bonapartists, we are. Waterloo was fought against the English."

She laid down the book, took up a pen, and exclaimed:

"And I can write, too."

She dipped the pen in the ink, and turned to Marius, saying:—

"Would you like to see? Look here, I will write a line to show you."

And ere he had time to answer, she wrote on a sheet of white paper in the middle of the table, "Here are the cops."

Then throwing down the pen, she added:—

"There are no mistakes in spelling. You can look. My sister and I were well educated. We have not always been what we are now; we were not made —"

Here she stopped, fixed her eyes on Marius, and burst out laughing as she said, with an intonation which contained every possible form of agony choked by every possible form of cynicism:—

"Bah!"

And then she began to hum these words to a lively air:—

"I'm hungry, papa,
I've no veal fry;
I'm cold, mamma,
No clothes have I.
Shiver,
Lolotte!
Sob,
Jacquot!"

She had scarcely finished the couplet when she exclaimed:—

"Do you ever go to the play, Monsieur Marius? I do. I have a little brother, who is a friend of the actors, who gives me tickets every now and then. I don't care for the gallery

much, though, for you are so squeezed up. Sometimes, too, there are rough people there, and people who smell bad."

Then she stared at Marius, gave him a strange look, and said:—

"Do you know, M. Marius, that you are a very good-looking fellow?"

And at the same moment the same thought occurred to both, which made her smile and him blush.

She walked up to him and laid a hand on his shoulder: "You don't pay any attention to me; but I know you, M. Marius. I meet you here on the staircase; and then I see you going to a swell named M. Mabœuf, who lives over at Austerlitz, when I am out that way. Your tumbled hair is very becoming."

She tried to make her voice very soft, and only succeeded in making it very low; a part of her words was lost in the passage from the larynx to the lips, as on a pianoforte where some notes are missing.

Marius retreated gently.

"I have a packet," he said, with his cold gravity, "which, I believe, belongs to you. Allow me to return it to you." And he handed her the envelope which contained the four letters.

She clapped her hands and cried:—

"We looked for it everywhere."

Then she eagerly seized the parcel and opened the envelope, saying:—

"Lord of lords! how my sister and I *did* look for it! And so you found it? On the boulevard, did you not? It must have been there! You see, we dropped it while we were running, and it was my brat of a sister who was such an ass. When we got home we could not find it; and as we did not wish to be beaten,—which is unnecessary, which is entirely unnecessary, which is absolutely unnecessary,—we said at home that we had delivered the letters, and that the answer was, Nix! And here are the poor letters! Well, and how did you know that they were mine? Oh, yes, by the writing.

So, then, it was you that we ran against last night? We could not see anything; and I said to my sister, 'Is it a gentleman?' and she answered, 'Yes, I think it is a gentleman.'"

As she said this, she unfolded the petition addressed to the "benevolent gentleman of the church of St. Jacques, du Haut-pas."

"Hullo!" said she, "this is the one for the old swell who goes to Mass. Why, 'tis just the hour. I will carry it to him. Perhaps he will give us something for breakfast."

Then she began to laugh again, and added:—

"Do you know what it will mean if we breakfast to-day? We shall have our breakfast of the day before yesterday, our dinner of the day before yesterday, our breakfast of yesterday, our dinner of yesterday,—all that at once this morning. Well, hang it all! if you are not satisfied, rot, dogs!"

This reminded Marius of the hapless girl's errand to him; he fumbled in his waistcoat-pocket but found nothing.

The girl went on, and seemed speaking as if no longer conscious of the presence of Marius:—

"Sometimes I go out at night. Sometimes I do not come home. Last winter, before we came here, we lived under the arches of the bridges. We huddled close together not to be frozen. My little sister cried. How sad the water is. When I thought of drowning myself, I said: 'No, it is too cold.' I go about all alone when I like, and sometimes sleep in ditches. Do you know, at night, when I walk along the boulevard, I see trees like pitchforks, I see black houses as tall as the towers of Notre-Dame; I fancy that the white walls are the river, and I say to myself: 'Why, there is water!' The stars are like lamps in an illumination, and you might say that they smoke and the wind blows them out. I feel stunned, as if horses were snorting in my ears. Although it is night, I hear barrel-organs and spinning-machines; but what do I know? I fancy people are throwing stones at me; and I run away without knowing where, for everything turns round me. When you have not eaten, you feel queer."

And she gazed at him with haggard eyes.

By dint of searching and fumbling in the depths of his pockets, Marius succeeded in getting together five francs sixteen sous; it was at this moment all that he possessed in the world. "Here is my to-day's dinner," he thought, "and to-morrow will take care of itself." He kept the sixteen sous and gave the girl the five-franc piece.

She clutched the coin.

"Good!" she said, "the sun shines."

And, as if the sunshine had the property of melting the avalanches of slang in her brain, she went on:—

"Five francs! a shiner! a monarch! in these diggins? that's nobby! Well, you are a jolly cock, and my panter is yours. Hurrah, boys! two days' stingo; here's a feed; two days to lie off; we'll liquor up well! and good soup! you're a daisy!"

She pulled her chemise up over her shoulders, made Marius a low courtesy, gave a familiar wave of the hand, and walked toward the door, saying:—

"Good-day, sir. All right. I must hunt up my old man."

As she passed, she saw a stale crust of dry bread mouldering in the dust on the drawers; she threw herself upon it, and bit into it savagely, muttering:—

"It is good, it is hard; it breaks my teeth!"

Then she left the room.

CHAPTER V

A PROVIDENTIAL PEEP-HOLE

MARIUS had lived for the past five years in poverty, want, and even in distress; but he now saw that he had never known what real misery was. He had just witnessed it for the first time; it was the phantom which had just passed before him. For, in truth, he who has only seen the misery of man has seen nothing; he must see the misery of woman.

He who has seen the misery of woman has seen nothing; he must see the misery of the child.

When man has reached his last extremity, he has also reached the limit of his resources; and, then, woe to the defenceless beings who surround him! Work, wages, bread, fire, courage, and good will all fail him at once. The light of day seems extinguished outside, the moral light is extinguished within him. In these shadows man encounters the weakness of the woman and the child, and bends them violently to ignominy.

In such a case, every horror is possible. Despair is surrounded by thin partitions which all open upon vice and crime.

Health, youth, honour, the sacred and retiring delicacy of the still innocent flesh, the heart, virginity, modesty, that epidermis of the soul, are foully manipulated by that groping hand which seeks resources, meets with opprobrium, and accepts it.

Fathers, mothers, children, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, and daughters, cling together and are incorporated, almost like a mineral formation, in that misty promiscuity of sexes, relations, ages, infamies, and innocencies. They crouch, back to back, in a sort of den of destiny. They look at each other piteously. Oh! the unfortunates! How pale they are! how cold they are! It seems as if they dwelt in a planet much farther from the sun than our own.

This girl was to Marius a sort of emissary from the darkness. She revealed to him a hideous side of night.

Marius almost reproached himself for the preoccupations of revery and passion which, up to that day, had prevented him from bestowing a glance upon his neighbours. The payment of their rent was a mechanical impulse, which any one might have felt; but he, Marius, ought to have done better. What! only a wall separated him from those abandoned creatures, who lived groping in darkness, beyond the pale of other living beings. He stood elbow to elbow with them; he was, in some sort, the last link of the human race which they touched. He heard them live, or rather die, at his side, and

he paid no attention to them! Every moment, every day he heard them, through the wall, coming, going, and talking,—and he did not listen! And in their words were groans, and he did not hear them! His thoughts were elsewhere,—engaged with dreams, impossible sunbeams, loves in the air, and follies; and yet, human creatures, his brethren in Christ, his brethren in the people, were slowly dying by his side, dying in vain! He even formed part of their misfortune, and he aggravated it. For, if they had had another neighbour, a neighbour more attentive, less chimerical, an ordinary, charitable man, their indigence would surely have been observed, their signals of distress perceived, and they might, perhaps, have been picked up and rescued long before. They seemed very depraved, very corrupt, no doubt, very vile, and indeed very odious; but persons who fall without being degraded are rare; besides, there is a stage where the unfortunate and the infamous are mingled and confounded in one word, a fatal word,—the miserable. With whom lies the fault? And then again, should not the charity be all the greater in proportion as the fall is deep?

While he read himself this lecture,—for there were occasions on which Marius, like all truly honest souls, was his own pedagogue, and reproached himself more than he deserved,—he gazed at the wall which separated him from the Jondrettes, as if his pitying glance could pierce the partition and warm those unhappy beings. The wall was a thin layer of plaster, supported by laths and beams; and, as we have stated, the murmurs of words and voices were distinctly heard through it. A man must be a dreamer like Marius not to have noticed the fact before. No paper was hung on either side of the wall, and its clumsy construction was plainly visible. Almost unconsciously, Marius examined the partition; for at times revery examines, scrutinizes, and observes much as thought does. All at once, he rose; for he had just discovered near the top, close to the ceiling, a triangular hole produced by a gap between three laths. The plaster which once covered this hole had fallen off; and by climbing on his

chest of drawers, he could see through this aperture into the room of the Jondrettes. Commiseration has, and should have, its curiosity: The opening formed a sort of peep-hole. It is permissible to regard misfortune traitorously in order to aid it.

“Let me see,” thought Marius, “what these people are like, and what state they are in.”

He clambered on the drawers, put his eye to the hole, and looked.

CHAPTER VI

THE SAVAGE IN HIS LAIR

CITIES, like forests, have their dens, in which everything that is most wicked and formidable conceals itself. The only difference is, that which hides itself thus in cities is ferocious, unclean, and petty,—that is to say, ugly. That which conceals itself in the forest is ferocious, savage, and grand,—that is to say, beautiful. Den for den, that of the beast is preferable to that of the man. Caverns are better than hovels.

What Marius saw was a hovel.

Marius was poor, and his room was poverty-stricken; but, as his poverty was noble, so his room was clean. The den into which he now looked was abject, dirty, fetid, infectious, dark and sordid. The only furniture consisted of a straw-bottomed chair, a rickety table, a few old bits of crockery, and in two corners, two indescribable beds. The only light came through a sky-light with four panes of glass, festooned with spider-webs. Through this opening came just sufficient light to make the face of a man seem the face of a spectre. The walls had a leprous look, and were covered with gashes and scars, like a face disfigured by some horrible disease; a filthy damp oozed from them. Obscene sketches, clumsily drawn in charcoal, could be distinguished on them.

The room which Marius occupied had a dilapidated brick floor. This one was neither tiled nor planked; people walked directly on the old plaster, which had grown black under the feet. Upon this uneven floor, in which the dust was fairly incrustcd, and which had but one virginity, that of the broom, were capriciously grouped constellations of old shoes, boots, and frightful rags. This room, however, had a fireplace, and for this reason was let at forty francs a year. There was a little of everything in this fireplace,— a chafing-dish, a pot, some broken boards, rags hanging from nails, a bird-cage, ashes, and even a little fire. Two brands were smouldering there in a melancholy way.

One thing which increased the horror of this garret was its size. It had projections, angles, nooks, black holes under the roof, bays, and promontories. Hence came frightful, unfathomable corners, where it seemed as if spiders as big as your fist, wood-lice as large as your foot, and possibly some human monster, must lurk.

One of the beds was near the door, the other near the window; but one end of each touched the mantelpiece, and faced Marius.

In a corner near the hole through which Marius was peeping, a coloured engraving in a black frame, under which was written in large letters, "The Dream," hung against the wall. It represented a sleeping woman and a sleeping child, the child lying on the woman's knees, an eagle in a cloud with a crown in its beak, and the woman pushing the crown away from the child's head, without awaking it, however; in the background, Napoleon, surrounded by a glory, leaning against a dark blue column, with a yellow capital, ornamented with this inscription:—

MARINGO.
AUSTERLITZ.
JENA.
WAGRAMME.
ELOUT.

Below this frame, a sort of wooden panel, longer than it was broad, was placed on the ground and leaned against the wall.

It looked like a picture with its face turned to the wall, some daub, or some pier-glass detached from a wall and forgotten there while waiting to be rehung.

At the table, on which Marius noticed pen, ink, and paper, sat a man about sixty years of age, short, thin, livid, haggard, with a crafty, cruel, and uneasy look,—a hideous scamp.

If Lavater had studied that face, he would have found the vulture blended with the attorney's clerk. The bird of prey and the pettifogger rendering each other uglier and more complete,—the pettifogger of trickery making the bird of prey ignoble, and the bird of prey making the pettifogger horrible.

This man had a long gray beard. He wore a woman's chemise, which showed his hairy chest and naked arms, bristling with gray hairs. Under this chemise were muddy trousers, and boots out of which his toes stuck.

He had a pipe in his mouth, and was smoking. There was no bread in the hovel, but there was still tobacco.

He was writing,—probably more letters like those which Marius had read.

On the corner of the table lay an old, broken-backed, red volume, the size of which, the old 12mo of circulating libraries, revealed a romance. On the cover sprawled the following title, printed in large capitals: "GOD, THE KING, HONOUR, AND THE LADIES. BY DUCRAY DUMINIL, 1814."

As he wrote, the man talked aloud, and Marius heard his words:—

"Only to think that there is no equality, even when a man is dead! Just look at Père Lachaise! The great, those who are rich, are up above, in Acacia Avenue, which is paved. They reach it in a coach. The little folk, the poor people, the wretched,—why, they are put down at the bottom, where there is mud up to your knees, in damp holes. They are put

there that they may rot all the sooner. You can't go to see them without sinking into the ground."

Here he stopped, smote the table with his fist, and added, while he gnashed his teeth:—

"Oh, I could eat the world!"

A stout woman, who might be forty, or one hundred, crouched near the fireplace on her naked heels. She, too, was dressed in a chemise and a knit petticoat patched with bits of old cloth. An apron of coarse canvas concealed one-half of the petticoat. Though this woman was sitting all of a heap, it was evident that she was very tall,—a sort of giantess beside her husband. She had frightful hair, of a reddish auburn, beginning to turn gray, which she thrust back every now and then with her huge greasy hands with their flat nails.

By her side, on the floor, lay an open volume, of the same form as the other,—probably part of the same romance.

On one of the beds, Marius caught a glimpse of a tall, unhealthy-looking young girl, sitting there almost naked, and with hanging feet, who did not seem to hear, see, or live.

She was, doubtless, the younger sister of the one who had come to his room.

She appeared to be eleven or twelve years of age; but on examining her attentively, it could be seen that she was at least fourteen. It was the girl who said on the boulevard on the previous night, "I bolted, bolted, bolted."

She was of that sickly sort who are backward for a long time, then shoot up quickly and suddenly. It is poverty which produces these poor human plants. These creatures have neither childhood nor youth. At fifteen they seem twelve, and at sixteen they seem twenty. To-day a little girl, to-morrow a woman. We might almost say that they stride through life in order to reach the end more rapidly.

At this moment, however, she had the look of a child.

In this abode there was not the slightest sign of work; not a loom, a spinning-wheel, or a single tool, but in one corner were some iron implements of dubious aspect. It was that dull indolence which follows despair and precedes death.

Marius gazed for some time at this mournful interior, which was more terrifying than the interior of a tomb; for the human soul could be felt stirring there, and life palpitating.

The garret, the cellar, the hole where some poor wretches crawl at the very bottom of the social structure, is not exactly the sepulchre; it is its antechamber. But, like those rich men who display their greatest magnificence at the entrance to their palaces, it seems that death, which is close at hand, places all its greatest wretchedness in that vestibule.

The man was silent, the woman did not speak, and the girl did not seem to breathe. The scratching of the pen was distinctly audible.

The man growled, without ceasing to write, "Scoundrels, scoundrels, all are scoundrels!"

This variation upon Solomon's exclamation drew a sigh from the wife.

"Be calm, my love," she said; "do not hurt yourself, darling. You are too good to write to all those people, husband."

In misery, bodies draw more closely together, as in cold weather, but hearts are estranged. This woman, to all appearance, must have loved this man with all the love of which she was capable; but probably it had been destroyed by the daily and mutual reproaches of the frightful distress that pressed upon the whole family. Only the ashes of affection for her husband now existed within her. Still, caressing appellations, as frequently happens, had survived. She called him *darling*, *pet*, *husband*, with her lips; but her heart was silent.

The man resumed his writing.

CHAPTER VII

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

MARIUS, with an aching heart, was just about to descend from the species of observatory which he had improvised, when a sound attracted his attention, and led him to remain at his post.

The door of the garret was suddenly thrown open, and the elder daughter appeared on the threshold. She had on her feet clumsy men's shoes, covered with mud, which had even splashed her red ankles; and she was covered with an old ragged cloak, which Marius had not noticed an hour previously, but which she had probably left at his door, in order to inspire greater pity, and had put on again when she went out. She came in, shut the door after her, stopped to take breath, for she was panting, and then cried, with an expression of triumph and joy:—

“He is coming!”

The father turned his eyes to her, the mother turned her head, and the little sister did not move.

“Who?” asked the father.

“The gentleman.”

“The philanthropist?”

“Yes.”

“From the church of St. Jacques?”

“Yes.”

“That old man?”

“Yes.”

“He is coming?”

“He is following me.”

“Are you sure?”

“I am sure.”

“Sure he is coming?”

“He is coming in a hackney coach, I tell you.”

"A hackney coach! Why, he is a regular Rothschild!"
The father rose.

"How can you be sure? If he is coming in a coach, how did you get here before him? Did you give him the address, and are you certain you told him it was the last door on the right at the end of the passage? I only hope he will not make a mistake. Did you find him at church? Did he read my letter, and what did he say to you?"

"Ta, ta, ta," said the girl, "how you gallop, my good man. I went into the church; he was in his usual place. I made him a courtesy and handed him the letter; he read it, and said to me, 'Where do you live, my child?' I said, 'I will show you the way, sir;' he said, 'No, give me your address, for my daughter has some purchases to make. I will take a hackney coach and be at your house as soon as you.' I gave him the address; and when I mentioned the house, he seemed surprised, and hesitated for a moment, but then said, 'No matter, I will go.' When Mass was over, I saw him leave the church and get into a coach with his daughter. And of course I told him the last door on the right at the end of the passage."

"And how do you know that he will come?"

"I have just seen the coach turn into the Rue du Petit Banquier, and that is why I ran."

"How do you know it was the same coach?"

"Because I noticed the number, so there!"

"What was it?"

"Four hundred and forty."

"Good, you are a clever girl."

The girl looked boldly at her father, and said, as she pointed to the shoes on her feet:—

"Perhaps I am a clever girl; but I tell you I will not put on those shoes again. That I won't. In the first place, on account of my health; and, in the next, for the sake of decency. I know nothing more annoying than loose soles that go squelch, squelch, squelch, all the time. I would sooner go barefoot."

"You are right," replied the father, in a gentle voice, which contrasted with the girl's rudeness; "but the poor are not admitted into churches unless they wear shoes. God's presence must not be entered barefoot," he added bitterly.

Then he returned to the subject that absorbed him.

"And so you are sure that he will come?"

"He is at my heels," she replied.

The man drew himself up, and there was a sort of illumination on his face.

"Wife," he cried, "you hear! Here is the philanthropist; put out the fire."

The stupefied mother did not stir.

The father, with the agility of an acrobat, seized a cracked pitcher which stood on the chimney-piece, and threw water on the brands.

Then he said to his elder daughter:—

"Here, you, pull the straw out of the chair."

As his daughter did not understand him, he seized the chair and kicked the seat out. His leg passed through it.

As he drew out his leg, he asked his daughter:—

"Is it cold?"

"Very cold; it is snowing."

The father turned to the younger girl, who sat on the bed near the window, and shouted in a thundering voice:—

"Quick! Come off that bed, lazy thing! Will you never do anything; break a pane of glass!"

The little girl jumped off the bed, shivering.

"Break a pane!" he continued.

The girl was quite stunned, and did not move.

"Do you hear me?" repeated the father. "I tell you to break a pane."

The child, with a sort of terrified obedience, stood on tiptoe and broke a pane with her fist. The glass fell with a great crash.

"All right," said the father.

He was serious and abrupt. His eye rapidly surveyed every corner of the garret.

He was like a general making his final preparations at the moment when an action is about to begin.

The mother, who had not yet said a word, rose and asked in a slow, dull voice, the words seeming to issue as if frozen:—

“Darling, what do you intend to do?”

“Go to bed,” replied the man.

His tone admitted of no deliberation. The mother obeyed, and threw herself heavily on one of the beds.

A sob was now heard in one corner.

“What is that?” cried the father.

The younger girl, without leaving the dark corner in which she was crouching, showed her bleeding fist. In breaking the glass, she had cut herself. She crawled close to her mother’s bed, and cried silently.

It was the mother’s turn to draw herself up and exclaim:

“See, there! What nonsensical things you do! She has cut herself in breaking the window for you.”

“All the better,” said the man; “that’s what I expected.”

“What do you mean by ‘all the better’?” retorted the woman.

“Silence!” replied the father; “I suppress the liberty of the press.”

Then, tearing the chemise which he wore, he made a bandage, with which he quickly wrapped the girl’s bleeding wrist.

This done, his eye settled on the torn chemise with satisfaction.

“And the shirt, too!” he said; “all this looks well.” An icy blast whistled through the pane and entered the room. The outside fog penetrated it, and diffused itself like a piece of white wadding pulled apart by invisible fingers. Through the broken pane the snow could be seen falling. The cold promised by the Candlemas sun had really come. The father took a look around him, as if to make sure that he had forgotten nothing. He fetched an old shovel and strewed the ashes over the wet logs, so as to conceal them entirely. Then, getting up and leaning against the chimney-piece he said:—

“Now we can receive the philanthropist.”

CHAPTER VIII

A SUNBEAM IN THE GARRET

THE elder girl walked up to her father and laid her hand in his.

"Just feel how cold I am!" she said.

"Stuff!" answered the father, "I am much colder than that."

The mother cried impetuously:—

"You are always better off than others, you are, even in bad things."

"Down!" said the man.

The mother, looked at by him in a certain way, held her tongue, and there was a momentary silence in the den.

The elder girl was carelessly removing the mud from the edge of her cloak, and her younger sister continued to sob. The mother had taken the little one's head between her hands, and covered it with kisses, whispering:

"Pray do not go on so, my treasure; it will be nothing, so don't cry, or you will vex your father."

"No," cried the father; "on the contrary, sob, sob away; that's all right."

Then he turned to the elder girl:—

"Why, he is not coming! Suppose he were not to come! I should have broken my pane, put out my fire, unseated my chair, and torn my shirt all for nothing."

"And hurt the little one," murmured the mother.

"Do you know," continued the father, "that it is infernally cold in this devil's own garret? Suppose the man did not come! But no, he keeps us waiting, and says to himself: 'Well, they must wait my pleasure. That's what they are sent into the world for!' Oh, how I hate the rich; and with what joy, jubilation, enthusiasm, and satisfaction I could strangle them all! All the rich folk, I say,— those men

who pretend to be charitable, who play the devout, attend Mass, keep in with the priests, *preachy, preachy*, in their skull-caps, who think themselves above us, who come to humiliate us, and bring us 'clothes,' as they say. They bring us old duds not worth four sous! and bread! That's not what I want, you pack of scoundrels, but money. Ah, money — never! Because they say that we would spend it in drink, and that we are drunkards and vagabonds. And they, what are they, pray, and what have they been in their time? Thieves, or else they could not have grown rich. Oh, society ought to be tossed in a blanket, and the whole lot thrown into the air! They would all be smashed, very possibly; but at any rate, no one would have anything then, and that would be so much gained! But what is your humbug of a benevolent gentleman about! Why don't he come? Perhaps the beast has forgotten the address. I will bet that the old brute —"

At that moment there was a gentle tap at the door. The man rushed forward and opened it, exclaiming with deep bows, and smiles of adoration:—

"Come in, sir; deign to enter, my respected benefactor, as well as your charming daughter."

A man of middle age and a young lady stood in the doorway.

Marius had not left his post. What he felt at this moment is beyond the power of the human tongue to tell. It was She.

Anyone who has loved knows all the radiant meaning contained in the three letters that form the word She.

It was certainly she. Marius could hardly see her through the luminous vapour which had suddenly overspread his eyes.

It was that sweet, absent creature, the star which had shone upon him for six months; it was those eyes, that brow, that mouth, that lovely vanished face which had produced night by its departure. The vision had been eclipsed; it now reappeared.

It reappeared in this darkness, in this attic, in this filthy den, in this horror.

Marius trembled desperately. What! it was she! The palpitation of his heart dimmed his sight. He felt ready to burst into tears! What! he saw her again, after seeking her so long? It seemed to him as if he had lost his soul and had just found it again.

She was still the same, though perhaps a little pale. Her delicate face was framed in a violet velvet bonnet, and her figure was hidden by a black satin pelisse. Her little foot in a silk boot peeped from under her long dress.

She was still accompanied by M. Leblanc. She walked into the room and placed a large parcel on the table.

The elder Jondrette girl had retired behind the door, and looked with jealous eyes at the velvet bonnet, the satin pelisse, and the charming, happy face.

CHAPTER IX

JONDRETTE ALMOST WEEPS

THE garret was so dark that those who entered from without felt much as if they were going into a cellar. The two new-comers, therefore, advanced with some degree of hesitation, scarcely able to distinguish the vague forms around them, while they were distinctly seen and closely examined by the eyes of the denizens of the attic, who were accustomed to this twilight.

M. Leblanc approached Father Jondrette, with his sad and kindly smile, and said:—

“You will find in this parcel, sir, new clothes, woollen stockings, and blankets.”

“Our angelic benefactor overwhelms us,” said Jondrette, bowing to the ground.

Then, bending down to the ear of his elder daughter, he added in a hurried whisper, while the two visitors were examining this lamentable interior:—

“There! what did I tell you? Old clothes! no money! They are all alike! By the way, how was the letter to that old ass signed?”

“Fabantou.”

“The actor; all right.”

It was lucky that Jondrette asked this, for at that very moment M. Leblanc turned to him, and said, with the air of a person who is trying to remember a name:

“I see that you are much to be pitied, Monsieur —”

“Fabantou,” Jondrette quickly added.

“Monsieur Fabantou; yes, that is it; I remember.”

“An actor, sir, who was successful in his time.”

Here Jondrette evidently believed that the moment had come to capture his “philanthropist;” and he shouted in a voice which smacked at once of the bombast of the country mountebank and the humility of the professional beggar:—

“A pupil of Talma, sir! I am a pupil of Talma! Fortune smiled upon me formerly, but now, alas! The day of misfortune has come. You see, my benefactor, we have no bread, no fire. My poor kids have no fire. My sole chair without a seat! a pane of glass broken! in such weather as this! my wife in bed, ill!”

“Poor woman!” said M. Leblanc.

“My child wounded,” added Jondrette.

The child, distracted by the arrival of the strangers, was staring at the “young lady,” and had ceased sobbing.

“Cry, I tell you; roar!” Jondrette whispered to her.

At the same time he pinched her injured hand. All this was done with the talent of a conjurer.

The little one uttered piercing cries, and the adorable girl, whom Marius in his heart called “his Ursula,” quickly ran to her.

“Poor, dear child!” said she.

“You see, my beautiful young lady,” continued Jondrette,

“her bleeding wrist. It is the result of an accident which happened to her while working at a factory to earn six sous a day. It is possible that her arm will have to be cut off.”

“Really?” said the old gentleman in alarm.

The little girl, taking this remark seriously, began to sob louder than ever.

“Alas, yes, my benefactor!” answered the father.

For some minutes past, Jondrette had been staring at the “philanthropist” in a peculiar way. As he spoke he seemed to be studying him attentively, as if trying to recall certain memories. All at once, profiting by a moment during which the new-comers were questioning the little girl about her injured hand, he passed close to his wife, who was lying in her bed with a surprised and stupid air, and said to her, in a hurried whisper:—

“Look at that man!”

Then he turned to M. Leblanc and continued his lamentations.

“See, sir! My sole clothing consists of a chemise belonging to my wife, and all torn, too! in the heart of winter. I cannot go out for want of a coat. If I had the smallest bit of a coat, I would go and call on Mademoiselle Mars, who knows me, and is much attached to me. Does she still live in the Rue de la Tour des Dames? Do you know, sir, that we played together in the provinces, and that I shared her laurels? Célimène would come to my help, sir! Elmire would give alms to Belisarius. But no; nothing! and not a sou in the house! My wife ill, not a sou! my daughter dangerously injured, not a sou! my wife suffers from shortness of breath, — it comes from her age, and then her nervous system has something to do with it. She ought to have treatment, and so ought my daughter. But the physician and the apothecary, how are they to be paid? I have not a farthing! I would kneel down before a centime, sir. You see to what the arts are reduced! And do you know, my charming young lady, and you, my generous protector, who exhale virtue and goodness, and who perfume the church where my poor child sees

you daily when she goes to say her prayers,— For I am bringing up my daughters religiously, sir. I do not wish them to take to the stage. Ah, the jades, just let me catch them tripping! I do not jest, sir; I'm always kicking up a row about honour, morality, and virtue. Just ask them! They must walk straight. They have a father. They are none of those wretches who begin by having no family, and end by marrying the public. Such a girl is Miss Nobody, and becomes Madame All-the-world. None of that in the Fabantou family! I mean to bring them up virtuously; and they must be respectable and civil, and believe in God, by Jesus! —

“Well, sir, good sir, do you know what will happen to-morrow? To-morrow is the 4th of February, the fatal day, the last day of grace my landlord has granted me, and if I do not pay my rent by to-night, my eldest daughter, myself, my wife with her fever, my child with her wound,—we shall all four of us be turned out of here and flung into the street, shelterless, in the rain and snow. There, sir! I owe four quarters,—a year's rent; that is to say, sixty francs.”

Jondrette lied. Four quarters would have been only forty francs; and he could not owe four, as it was not six months since Marius had paid two for him.

M. Leblanc took five francs from his pocket and threw them on the table.

Jondrette took time to growl in his grown-up daughter's ear:—

“The cheat! what does he expect me to do with his five francs? That won't pay for the chair and pane of glass. There's the result of making an outlay.”

In the meanwhile, M. Leblanc had taken off a heavy brown coat which he wore over his blue one, and had thrown it on the back of a chair.

“Monsieur Fabantou,” he said, “I have only these five francs about me; but I will take my daughter home and return to-night. Is it not to-night that you have to pay?”

Jondrette's face was lit up with a strange expression. He hurriedly answered:—

"Yes, respected sir, I must be with my landlord by eight o'clock."

"I will be here by six, and bring you the sixty francs."

"My benefactor!" Jondrette exclaimed wildly, and he added in a whisper:—

"Look at him well, wife."

M. Leblanc had given his arm to the lovely young lady, and was turning to the door.

"Till this evening, my friends," he said.

"At six o'clock?" asked Jondrette.

"At six o'clock precisely."

At this moment the overcoat left on the back of the chair caught the eye of the elder girl.

"Sir," said she, "you are forgetting your coat."

Jondrette gave his daughter a crushing glance, accompanied by a terrible shrug of the shoulders; but M. Leblanc turned and replied with a smile:—

"I do not forget it, I leave it."

"Oh, my protector," said Jondrette, "my august benefactor, I am melted to tears! Permit me to conduct you to your vehicle."

"If you go out," M. Leblanc remarked, "put on that overcoat, for it is really very cold."

Jondrette did not need to be told twice, but eagerly put on the brown coat. Then they all three went out, Jondrette preceding the two strangers.

CHAPTER X

THE TARIFF OF CAB FARES: TWO FRANCS AN HOUR

MARIUS had lost nothing of this scene, and yet, in reality, he had seen nothing. His eyes had remained fixed on the maiden. His heart had, so to speak, seized her and entirely enfolded her from her very first step into the garret. During the whole time she had been there, he had lived that life of ecstasy which suspends material perceptions and concentrates the whole mind upon one point. He contemplated not the girl, but the radiance which was dressed in a satin pelisse and a velvet bonnet. Had the planet Sirius entered the room he would not have been more dazzled.

While she was opening the parcel and unfolding the clothes and blankets, questioning the sick mother kindly and the little wounded girl tenderly, he watched her every movement, and tried to hear her words. Though he knew her eyes, her forehead, her beauty, her form, and her walk, he did not know the sound of her voice. He had once fancied that he had caught a few words at the Luxembourg, but he was not absolutely sure. He would have given ten years of his life to hear her speak, and to carry away in his soul a little of that music; but everything was drowned in the lamentable braying of Jondrette's trumpet. This added a touch of real anger to Marius's ravishment. He devoured her with his eyes. He could not imagine that it was really that divine creature whom he saw among those unclean beings in that monstrous den. He fancied that he saw a humming-bird among toads.

When she left the room, he had but one thought,—to follow her, to attach himself to her trail, not to leave her till he knew where she lived, at least not to lose her again, after having so miraculously found her. He leaped down from the drawers and seized his hat. Just as he laid his hand on the latch and was going out, a sudden thought stopped him. The

passage was long, the staircase steep, Jondrette talkative, and M. Leblanc had doubtless not yet got into his coach again. If, turning in the passage or on the stairs, he were to perceive him, Marius, in this house, he would assuredly be alarmed, and find means to escape him again, and so all would be over for the second time. What was to be done? Wait awhile? But during this delay the vehicle might start off. Marius was perplexed, but at length risked it, and left the room.

There was no one in the passage. He ran to the stairs, and as there was no one upon them he hurried down, and reached the boulevard just in time to see a hackney coach turn the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier, on its way back to Paris.

Marius rushed in that direction, and, on reaching the corner of the boulevard, saw the hackney coach again rapidly rolling along the Rue Mouffetard. It was already some distance off, and he had no means of catching up to it. To run after it was impossible; and, besides, a man running at full speed after the vehicle would surely be seen from it, and the father would recognize him. At this moment, by an extraordinary and marvellous chance, Marius observed a cab passing along the boulevard, empty. There was only one thing to be done,—to get into this cab and follow the hackney coach. That was sure, efficacious, and without danger.

Marius made the driver a sign to stop, and shouted to him:—

“By the hour!”

Marius had no cravat. He wore his old working coat, from which buttons were missing, and one of the plaits of his shirt was torn.

The driver stopped, winked, and held out his left hand to Marius, gently rubbing his forefinger with his thumb.

“What do you mean?” asked Marius.

“Pay in advance,” said the coachman.

Marius remembered that he had only sixteen sous in his pocket.

"How much?"

"Forty sous."

"I will pay on my return."

The driver's only reply was to whistle the air of "La Palisse," and to whip up his horse.

Marius stared at the departing cab with a bewildered look. For the want of twenty-four sous he must lose his joy, his happiness, his love! He fell back into night! He had seen, and was becoming blind again. He thought bitterly, and, we must add, with deep regret, of the five francs which he had given that very morning to that wretched girl. If he still had them, he would be saved, would emerge from limbo and darkness, and escape from isolation, spleen, and widowhood. He might have reknotted the black thread of his destiny to the beauteous golden thread which had just floated before his eyes, only to be broken again! He returned to his garret in despair.

He might have remembered that M. Leblanc had promised to return that evening, and that he had only to contrive to follow him better; but in his contemplation he had scarce heard him.

As he was going upstairs, he noticed on the other side of the boulevard, leaning against the deserted wall of the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, Jondrette, wrapped in the "philanthropist's" overcoat, conversing with one of those ill-looking men who are usually known as *prowlers at the barriers*,—men of equivocal faces and suspicious soliloquies, who look as if they entertained evil thoughts, who most usually sleep by day, which leads to the supposition that they work at night.

These two men, standing to talk in the snow, which was falling heavily, formed a group which a policeman would certainly have observed, but which Marius scarce noticed.

Still, in spite of his painful preoccupation, he could not help saying to himself that the man to whom Jondrette was talking looked like a certain Panchaud, *alias* Printanier, *alias* Bigrenaille, whom Courfeyrac had once pointed out to him, and who was regarded in the quarter as a very dangerous

night-bird. This Panchaud afterward figured in several criminal trials, and eventually became a notorious villain, though at this time he was only a scurvy villain. He now lives as a tradition among thieves and murderers. He had numerous followers toward the end of the last reign; and people used to talk about him in the Lion's den, at La Force, at nightfall, at the hour when groups assemble and converse in whispers. In that prison, and at the exact spot where the sewer, which served as the unheard-of way of escape, in broad daylight, for thirty prisoners, in 1843, passes under the culvert, his name, Panchaud, may be seen, audaciously carved, on the wall over the sewer, in one of his attempts to escape. In 1832 the police already had their eye on him, but he had not yet fairly made a start.

CHAPTER XI

WRETCHEDNESS OFFERS TO HELP SORROW

MARIUS ascended the stairs slowly; and just as he was about to enter his cell, he perceived behind him, in the passage, the elder of Jondrette's girls following him. This girl was odious in his sight, for it was she who had his five francs; but it was too late to ask them back from her, for both the hackney coach and the cab were now far away. Besides, she would not return them to him. As for questioning her about the abode of the persons who had been there just now, that was useless. It was plain that she did not know; for the letter signed Fabantou was addressed to the "benevolent gentleman of the church of St. Jacques du Haut-pas."

Marius went into his room and shut the door after him; but it did not close. He turned, and saw a hand which held it half open.

"What is it?" he asked. "Who's there?"

It was the girl.

"Oh, it's you!" continued Marius almost harshly; "you again? What do you want of me?"

She seemed thoughtful, and made no answer. She no longer had the bold air of the morning; she did not come in, but stood in the dark passage, where Marius could see her through the half-open door.

"Well, answer," said Marius; "what do you want?"

She raised her dull eye, in which a sort of lustre seemed to be vaguely kindled, and said:—

"Monsieur Marius, you look sad. What is the matter with you?"

"With me?" said Marius.

"Yes, you."

"Nothing."

"Yes, there is!"

"No."

"I tell you there is."

"Leave me alone."

Marius gave the door another push, but she still held it.

"Stop!" she said; "you are wrong. Though you are not rich, you were kind this morning. Be so again now. You gave me food, and now tell me what is the matter with you. It is easy to see that you are in sorrow. I do not like to see you so. What can I do to help you? Can I be of any service? Employ me; I do not ask for your secrets, and you need not tell them to me; but I may be of use to you. Surely I can help you, as I help my father. If there are any letters to deliver, or any address to be found by following people, or asking from door to door, I am very good at that sort of work. Well, you might tell me what is the matter with you, and I will go and speak to the persons. Sometimes it is enough for some one to speak to the persons to find out things, and everything comes right. Employ me."

An idea crossed Marius's mind. No branch is despised when we feel ourselves falling.

He went up to the girl.

"Listen to me," he said; "you brought an old gentleman and his daughter here."

"Yes."

"Do you know their address?"

"No."

"Find it for me."

The girl's dull eyes had become joyous, but now they became gloomy.

"Is that what you want?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Do you know them?"

"No."

"That is to say," she added quickly, "you don't know her, but you would like to know her."

This *them*, which became *her*, had something peculiarly significant and bitter about it.

"Well, can you do it?" Marius said.

"You shall have the 'lovely young lady's' address."

In these words (the "lovely young lady") there was again a meaning which annoyed Marius. He went on:—

"Well, no matter! The father's and daughter's address, — their address, I say."

She looked at him fixedly.

"What will you give me for it?"

"Whatever you like."

"Whatever I like?"

"Yes."

"You shall have the address."

She hung her head, then with a hurried gesture closed the door.

Marius was alone.

He sank into a chair, with his head and elbows on his bed, lost in thoughts which he could not grasp, and as if a prey to vertigo. All that had happened since the morning,—the apparition of the angel, her disappearance, and what this creature had just said to him, a gleam of hope floating in an

immense despair,—this is what confusedly filled his brain.

All at once he was violently aroused from his reverie. He heard Jondrette's shrill, hard voice uttering these words, full of the strangest interest for him:—

“I tell you that I am sure, and that I recognized him.”

Of whom was Jondrette talking, and whom had he recognized? M. Leblanc? The father of his “Ursula.” What! did Jondrette know him? Was Marius to obtain in this sudden and unexpected fashion all the information without which his life was so dark to him? Should he at last know who it was that he loved,—who this young girl was? Who her father was? Was the thick cloud that covered them about to be dispelled? Would the veil be rent asunder? Oh, heavens!

He bounded rather than climbed upon the chest of drawers, and resumed his place at the little opening in the party-wall.

Once more he saw the interior of Jondrette's den.

CHAPTER XII

THE USE MADE OF M. LEBLANC'S FIVE FRANCS

THERE was no change in the appearance of the family, save that mother and daughters had put on stockings and flannel skirts taken out of the parcel; and two new blankets were thrown on the beds.

The man had evidently just returned, for he was still out of breath; his daughters were seated on the floor near the fireplace, the elder tying up the younger's hand. The mother lay feebly on the bed by the fire, with an astonished face, while Jondrette walked up and down the room with long strides and extraordinary eyes.

The woman, who seemed frightened and struck with stupor before him, ventured to say:—

"What! really? You are sure?"

"Sure! It is eight years ago, but I recognize him. Oh, I recognize him! Why, I recognized him at once. What! did it not strike you?"

"No."

"And yet I said to you, 'Pay attention!' Why, it is his figure, his face, very little older (there are some people who never grow old: I don't know how they manage it),—it is the very sound of his voice. He is better dressed, that's all! Ah, you mysterious old devil, I have got you now!"

He paused and said to his daughters:—

"Be off, you two! It is funny that it did not strike you."

They rose to obey.

The mother stammered:—

"With her bad hand?"

"The air will do it good," said Jondrette. "Off with you!"

It was evident that this man was one of those who brooks of no answer.

The girls went out, but just as they passed the door the father clutched the elder by the arm, and said, with a peculiar accent:—

"You will be here at five o'clock precisely. Both of you. I shall want you."

Marius redoubled his attention.

When left alone with his wife, Jondrette began to walk the room again, taking two or three turns in silence. Then he spent several minutes in tucking the tail of the woman's chemise which he wore into his trousers.

All at once he turned to his wife; folded his arms, and exclaimed:—

"And shall I tell you something? The young lady —"

"Well, what?" retorted the wife; "the young lady?"

Marius could not doubt they were really talking about her.

He listened with ardent anxiety, and all his life was in his ears.

But Jondrette had stooped and was whispering to his wife. Then he rose, and ended aloud:—

“It is she.”

“That creature?” asked the wife.

“That creature!” said the husband.

No words can render the significance of the mother’s *that creature*. Surprise, rage, hatred, and passion were mingled and combined in one monstrous intonation. A few words, doubtless a name, which her husband had whispered in her ear, were sufficient to arouse this fat, sluggish woman, and to change her from frightful to repulsive.

“It is not possible,” she exclaimed; “when I think that my daughters go about barefooted, and have not a gown to put on! What! a satin pelisse, a velvet bonnet, shoes, and everything,—clothes worth more than two hundred francs, so that you might take her for a lady! No! You are mistaken! And then, that thing was hideous, while this one is not bad looking! She really is not bad looking! Oh, it cannot be!”

“And I tell you that it is. You will see.”

At this absolute assertion, the woman raised her large red and white face and looked at the ceiling with a hideous expression. At that moment she appeared to Marius even more to be feared than her husband. She was a sow with the look of a tigress.

“What!” she continued, “that horrible young lady who looked at my daughters with an air of pity,—she is that beggarly brat! Oh, I should like to burst her belly with my wooden shoes!”

She leaped off the bed, and stood for a moment unkempt, with dilating nostrils, parted lips, and clenched fists; then she fell back again on the bed. Her husband walked up and down and paid no attention to his wife.

After a short silence he went up to her, and stood before her with folded arms, as he had done a few moments previously.

“And shall I tell you something else?”

"What?" she asked.

He replied in a low, curt voice:—

"My fortune is made."

His wife glared at him with the look which means, "Has this man suddenly gone made?"

He continued:—

"Thunder! It's not so long since I was a parishioner of the parish of die-of-hunger-if-you-have-a-fire, and die-of-cold-if-you-have-bread! I have had enough of misery,— my share and other people's share! I am not joking now; I no longer consider this comical. I have had enough jokes, good God! I want no more farces, by the Eternal Father! I want to eat when I am hungry, and drink when I am thirsty; to gorge, sleep, and do nothing. I want to have my turn now, before I kick the bucket! I mean to be a bit of millionaire, I say!"

He walked up and down the room, and added:—

"Like the rest!"

"What do you mean?" asked his wife.

He shook his head, winked, and raised his voice like a street quack about to make an exhibition.

"What do I mean? Listen!"

"Hush!" said his wife, "not so loud, if it is business which ought not to be overheard."

"Nonsense! By whom? By our neighbour? I saw him go out just now. Besides, that long-legged idiot never listens; and besides, I tell you I saw him go out."

Still, by a sort of instinct, Jondrette lowered his voice, though not enough to prevent Marius from catching his remarks. One favourable circumstance, which enabled Marius to hear every word of this conversation, was the fallen snow which deadened the sound of the vehicles on the boulevard.

This is what Marius heard:—

"Listen carefully. The Cræsus is trapped, or as good as trapped. It is done, arranged, and I have seen the people. He will come at six this evening to bring the sixty francs, the old curmudgeon! Did you notice how I jawed him about my landlord, and my February 4? Why, that is not quarter-

day, the ass! Well, he will come at six o'clock. That's the time our neighbor goes to dinner, and Mother Bougon is washing up dishes in town, so there will be no one in the house. The neighbor never comes home before eleven. The little ones will be on the watch; you will help us, and he will knuckle down."

"And suppose he don't knuckle down?" asked the wife.

Jondrette made a sinister gesture, and said:—

"We will fix him." And he burst into a laugh.

It was the first time that Marius had seen him laugh. His laugh was cold and quiet, and produced a shudder.

Jondrette opened a cupboard near the fireplace, and took out an old cap, which he put on his head, after brushing it with his cuff.

"Now," said he, "I'm going out. I have some more people to see,— good ones. You will see how well it will work. I shall be away as short a time as possible, for it will be a fine stroke of business; and do you look after the house."

And with his hands in his trousers-pockets, he stood thoughtfully for a moment, then suddenly exclaimed:

"Do you know that it is very lucky, all the same, that he did not recognize me. If he had recognized me too, he would not have returned. He would have slipped through our fingers. It was my beard that saved us,— my romantic beard, my pretty little romantic beard."

And he laughed again.

He went to the window. The snow was still falling and streaking the gray sky.

"What filthy weather!" he said.

Then he buttoned up his coat.

"The skin is too big, but no matter," he added. "It was devilish lucky that the old villain left it for me; for had he not, I could not have gone out, and the whole affair would have been spoiled. On what slight accidents things depend!"

And, pulling his cap over his eyes, he went out.

He had gone only a few steps when the door opened again, and his savage, crafty face reappeared in the opening.

"I forgot," he said; "you must have a brazier of charcoal ready."

And he threw into his wife's apron the five-franc piece which the "philanthropist" had left with him.

"How many bushels of charcoal?" asked the wife.

"Two, at least."

"That will cost thirty sous. With the rest I will buy some grub."

"Hang it! no."

"Why?"

"Don't spend the five balls."

"Why not?"

"Because I have something to buy, too."

"What?"

"Something."

"How much do you want?"

"Where is the nearest ironmonger's?"

"In the Rue Mouffetard."

"Oh, yes! At the corner of a street. I can see the shop."

"But tell me how much you want for what you have to buy."

"From fifty sous to three francs."

"There won't be much left for dinner."

"Don't bother about eating to-day; there is something better to do."

"That's enough, my jewel."

At these words from his wife, Jondrette closed the door again, and Marius heard his steps vanish along the passage and down the stairs.

It struck one at this moment from St. Medard's.

CHAPTER XIII

SOLUS CUM SOLO, IN LOCO REMOTO, NON COGITABUNTUR
ORARE PATER NOSTER

MARIUS, dreamer though he was, possessed, as we have said, a firm and energetic nature. His habits of solitary contemplation, while developing compassion and sympathy within him, had perhaps diminished his power of being irritated, but left intact the power of becoming indignant. He had the benevolence of a Brahmin and the sternness of a judge; he pitied a toad, but he crushed a viper.

Just now he had a nest of vipers before him, and he said: "I must set my foot upon these wretches."

Not one of the enigmas which he hoped to see solved had been answered. On the contrary, all of them were rather denser; and he had learned no more about the pretty girl of the Luxembourg and the man whom he called M. Leblanc, save that Jondrette knew them. Through the mysterious words which had been uttered, he saw but one thing distinctly, that a snare was preparing,—an obscure but terrible snare; that they were both in imminent danger, she probably, and her father certainly, and that they must be saved. The hideous combinations of the Jondrettes must be foiled, and the web of those spiders destroyed.

He watched the woman for a moment; she had taken an old iron stove from a corner and was rummaging among the old scarps of iron.

He got off the chest of drawers as quietly as he could, being careful not to make any noise.

In his terror at what was preparing, and in the horror with which the Jondrettes filled him, he felt a sort of joy at the idea that he might perhaps be allowed to render such a service to her whom he loved.

But what was he to do? Should he warn the persons

menaced? Where was he to find them? He did not know their address. They had re-appeared to him momentarily, and then plunged again into the immense depths of Paris. Should he await M. Leblanc at the gate that evening at six, when he came, and warn him of the snare? But Jondrette and his comrades would see him on the watch. The place was deserted; they would be stronger than he; they would find means to seize him or to get him out of the way, and the man whom Marius wished to save would be lost. It had just struck one; and as the trap was to be sprung at six o'clock, Marius had five hours before him.

There was only one thing to be done.

He put on his best coat, tied a handkerchief round his neck, took his hat, and went out, making no more noise than if he were walking barefoot on moss; besides, the woman was still rummaging among the old iron.

Once outside the house, he turned into the Rue du Petit Banquier.

He had almost reached the middle of this street near a very low wall, which may be stepped over in some places, and which abuts on unoccupied ground. He was walking slowly, deep in thought as he was, and the snow deadened the sound of his footsteps, when all at once he heard voices talking close by. He turned his head, but the street was deserted; there was no one there. It was broad daylight, and yet he distinctly heard the voices.

It occurred to him to look over the wall; and when he did so, he saw two men seated in the snow and conversing in a low voice, their backs to the wall.

They were strangers to him. One was a bearded man in a blouse, and the other a hairy fellow in rags. The bearded man wore a Greek fez, while the other was bareheaded, and the snow lay on his hair.

By thrusting his head out over them Marius could hear their talk. The hairy man said to the other, with a nudge:—

“With Patron-Minette to help, it cannot fail.”

“Do you think so?” asked the bearded man.

The hairy man added:—

“It’s a soft¹ for five hundred balls for each; and the worst that can happen is five years, six years, or ten at the most.”

The other replied with some hesitation, and shuddering under his Greek fez:—

“That is a stern fact; and it’s no use to go in search of such things.”

“I tell you that the affair cannot fail,” replied the hairy man. “Father What’s-his-name’s go-cart will be harnessed and ready.”

Then they began to talk of a melodrama which they had seen on the previous evening at the Gaîté.

Marius walked on.

It seemed to him that the mysterious remarks of these men, so strangely concealed behind that wall, and crouching in the snow, must have some connection with Jondrette’s abominable schemes; that must be the *affair*.

He went toward the Faubourg St. Marceau, and asked at the first shop he came to where he could find a police commissioner.

He was told at No. 14, Rue de Pontoise; and he proceeded thither.

As he passed a baker’s shop, he bought a two-sous roll and ate it, as he foresaw that he should not dine.

On the way, he did Providence justice. He thought that if he had not given the five francs in the morning to the Jondrette girl, he should have followed M. Leblanc’s hackney coach, and consequently known nothing. There would then have been no obstacle to Jondrette’s ambushade, and M. Leblanc would have been lost, and doubtless his daughter with him.

¹ *Soft*,—slang term for a bank-note.

CHAPTER XIV

WHERE A POLICE OFFICER GIVES TWO "KNOCK-ME-DOWNS" TO
A LAWYER

ON reaching No. 14, Rue de Pontoise, he went up to the first-floor, and asked for the commissioner.

"He is not in," said a clerk, "but there is an inspector to represent him. Will you speak to him? Is your business pressing?"

"Yes," said Marius.

The clerk led him to the commissioner's office. A tall man stood behind a grating, leaning against the fender of a stove, and holding up with both hands the skirts of a mighty coat with three capes. He had a square face, thin, firm lips, very fierce, thick, grayish whiskers, and a look fit to turn your pockets inside out. Of this look you might have said, not that it pierced, but that it searched.

This man did not appear much less ferocious or formidable than Jondrette; for sometimes it is just as alarming to meet a dog as a wolf.

"What do you want?" he asked Marius, without adding, "sir."

"The police commissioner."

"He is absent. I represent him."

"It is a very secret matter."

"Then speak."

"And very urgent."

"Then speak quick."

This calm, abrupt man was at once terrifying and reassuring. He inspired both fear and confidence. Marius told him of his adventure,—that a person whom he knew only by sight was to be enticed that very evening into a trap; that he, Marius Pontmercy, barrister, residing in the next room to the den, had heard the whole plot through the wall; that the

scoundrel who invented the snare was one Jondrette; that he would have accomplices, probably prowlers at the barriers, among others one Panchaud, *alias* Printanier, *alias* Bigrenaille; that Jondrette's daughters would be on the watch; that he had no way of warning the threatened man, as he did not even know his name; and that, lastly, all this would come off at six in the evening, at the most deserted spot on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, in house No. 50-52.

On hearing this number, the inspector raised his head and said coldly:—

"Then it is in the room at the end of the passage."

"Exactly," Marius replied; and added, "do you know the house?"

The inspector was silent for a moment, then answered, as he warmed his boot-heel at the door of the stove:—

"Apparently."

He went on, between his teeth, talking less to Marius than to his cravat:—

"Patron-Minette must be mixed up in this."

That word struck Marius.

"Patron-Minette!" he said; "yes, I did hear that name mentioned."

And he told the inspector of the dialogue between the hairy man and the bearded man, in the snow, behind the wall in Rue du Petit Banquier. The inspector growled:—

"The hairy man must be Brujon, and the bearded man, Demi-Liard, *alias* Two Millions."

He was again looking down and meditating. "As for Father What's-his-name, I can guess who he is. There, I have burned my coat; they always make too much fire in these cursed stoves. No. 50-52, formerly the property of one Gorgebeau."

Then he looked at Marius.

"You only saw the hairy man and the bearded man?"

"And Panchaud."

"You did not see a small devil of a dandy prowling about there?"

"No."

"Nor a heavy lump of a fellow, who looked like the elephant in the Jardin des Plantes?"

"No."

"Nor a scamp who looks like an old red tail?"

"No."

"As for the fourth, no one sees him, not even his pals, chums, and assistants. It is not surprising, therefore, that you did not see him."

"No. Who are all these men?" asked Marius.

The inspector continued:—

"Besides, it is not their time of day." He fell into silence, and presently added: "50-52. I know the old ark! Impossible for us to hide inside without the actors seeing us, and then they would escape by merely putting off the farce. They are so modest! an audience alarms them. That won't do, that won't do. I want to hear them sing and make them dance."

This soliloquy ended, he turned to Marius, and asked, as he looked at him searchingly:—

"Would you be afraid?"

"Of what?" asked Marius.

"Of those men."

"No more than I am of you," Marius answered roughly, for he was beginning to notice that this policeman had not yet said "sir" to him.

The inspector looked at Marius more intently still, and continued, with a sort of sententious solemnity:—

"You speak like a brave man and like an honest man. Courage does not fear crime, nor honesty the authorities."

Marius interrupted him.

"That is all very well, but what do you intend doing?"

The inspector restricted himself to saying:—

"The lodgers in that house have latch-keys to let themselves in at night. You have one?"

"Yes," said Marius.

"Have you it about you?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me," said the inspector.

Marius took the key out of his waist-coat pocket, handed it to the inspector, and added:—

"If you take my advice, you will bring a strong force."

The inspector gave Marius such a glance as Voltaire might have given a provincial academician who suggested a rhyme to him; then he thrust both hands into his immense coat-pockets and produced two small steel pistols, of the sort called "knock-me-downs." He handed them to Marius, saying sharply and curtly:—

"Take these. Go home. Conceal yourself in your room, and let them suppose you out. They are loaded; each with two bullets. You will watch, as you tell me there is a hole in the wall. Those fellows will come; let them go on a little. When you think the matter is ripe, and that it is time to stop it, fire a pistol; but not too soon. The rest concerns me. A shot in the air, in the ceiling, I don't care where,—but mind, not too soon. Wait till they begin to put on the screw. You are a lawyer,—you know what that means."

Marius took the pistols, and placed them in a side pocket of his coat.

"They bulge and attract attention," said the inspector; "put them in your trousers-pockets."

Marius did so.

"And now," continued the inspector, "there is not a moment for any one to lose. What o'clock is it? Half-past two. You said seven?"

"Six o'clock," Marius corrected.

"Time enough," said the inspector; "but only just time. Do not forget anything I have said to you. Bang! A pistol-shot."

"All right," replied Marius.

And as he put his hand on the latch to leave the room, the inspector shouted to him:—

"By the way, if you should want me between this and then, come or send here. Ask for Inspector Javert."

CHAPTER XV

JONDRETTE MAKES HIS PURCHASE

SOME minutes later, about three o'clock, Courfeyrac happened to pass along the Rue Mouffetard, accompanied by Bossuet. The snow was thicker than ever, and filled the air. Bossuet had just said to Courfeyrac:—

"To see all these snow-flakes, you would say that there was a plague of white butterflies in heaven."

All at once Bossuet caught sight of Marius coming up the street toward the barrier, with a peculiar look.

"Hullo!" said Bossuet; "there's Marius."

"I saw him," said Courfeyrac; "but we won't speak to him."

"Why not?"

"He is busy."

"At what?"

"Do you not see that he looks as if he were following some one?"

"That is true," said Bossuet.

"Only see what eyes he makes!" Courfeyrac added.

"But who the deuce is he following?"

"Some Mimi-Goton with flowers in her bonnet. He is in love."

"But," Bossuet observed, "I do not see any Mimi or any Goton, or any bonnet trimmed with flowers in the street. There is not a woman in sight."

Courfeyrac looked, and exclaimed: "He is following a man!"

A man wearing a cap, and whose gray beard could be seen, although his back was turned, was walking about twenty yards ahead of Marius.

The man was dressed in a coat which was perfectly new,

and too large for him, and a frightful pair of ragged trousers, all black with mud.

Bossuet burst into a laugh.

"Who can that man be?"

"That man?" replied Courfeyrac. "Oh, he is a poet. Poets are given to wearing the trousers of old-clothes men and the coats of peers of France."

"Let us see where Marius is going," said Bossuet, "and where this man is going. Suppose we follow them, eh?"

"Bossuet!" exclaimed Courfeyrac, "Eagle of Meaux, you are a regular brute. Follow a man who is following another man, indeed!"

They turned back.

Marius had really seen Jondrette in the Rue Mouffetard, and was spying his movements.

Jondrette went straight on, not at all suspecting that an eye was already upon him.

He left the Rue Mouffetard, and Marius saw him enter one of the most hideous lodging-houses in the Rue Gracieuse, where he remained for about a quarter of an hour, and then returned to the Rue Mouffetard. He stopped at an iron-monger's shop, on the corner of the Rue Pierre-Lombard; and a few minutes after, Marius saw him come out of the shop, with a large cold-chisel set in a white-wood handle, which he hid under his coat. He then turned to his left and hurried toward the Rue du Petit Banquier. Day was drawing in; the snow, which had ceased for a moment, had begun again; Marius concealed himself at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier, which was deserted as usual, and did not follow Jondrette. It was lucky that he did so; for Jondrette, on reaching the spot where Marius had listened to the conversation of the hairy man and the bearded man, looked round, made sure that he was not followed, clambered over the wall, and disappeared.

The waste ground enclosed by this wall communicated with the backyard of a livery-stable keeper of bad repute, who had

failed in business, but still had a few vehicles standing under sheds.

Marius thought it would be as well to take advantage of Jondrette's absence and return home. Besides, time was slipping away, and every evening, Ma'am Bougon when she went to wash up dishes in town, had a habit of closing the door, which was always locked at dusk; and as Marius had given his latch-key to the inspector, it was important that he should be in time.

Night had closed in along the whole horizon, and in the whole immensity there was but one point still illumined by the sun, and that was the moon, which was rising red behind the low dome of the Salpêtrière.

Marius hurried back to No. 50-52. The door was still open when he arrived. He went up the stairs on tiptoe, and glided along the passage-way to his room. This passage, it will be remembered, was bordered on either side by rooms which were now empty and to let. Ma'am Bougon, as a general rule, left the doors open. As he passed one of these doors, Marius fancied that he saw in an uninhabited room the heads of four motionless men, vaguely lit up by a remnant of daylight which fell through a dormer window. Marius did not attempt to see them, as he did not wish to be seen himself. He succeeded in re-entering his room noiselessly and unseen. It was high time. A moment later he heard Ma'am Bougon go out, and the house-door shut behind her.

CHAPTER XVI

A SONG TO AN ENGLISH TUNE FASHIONABLE IN 1832

MARIUS sat down on his bed. It might be about half-past five. Only half an hour separated him from what was about to happen. He heard his pulses beat as you hear the tick of a clock in the darkness. He thought of the

double march which was taking place at that moment in the shadows,—crime advancing on one side, and justice coming up on the other. He was not frightened, but he could not think without a certain tremor of the things that were about to happen. Like all those who are suddenly assailed by a surprising adventure, the whole day produced on him the effect of a dream, and that he might not believe himself the prey of a nightmare, he was obliged to feel the cold barrels of the pistols in his pockets.

It no longer snowed. The moon, now very bright, came out of the clouds; and its beams, mingled with the white reflection from the fallen snow, imparted a twilight appearance to the room.

There was a light in Jondrette's den, and Marius saw the hole in the party-wall glow with a ruddy brilliancy that seemed to him the colour of blood.

It was evident that this light could not be produced by a candle. There was no movement in the den, no one was stirring, no one spoke; there was not a breath. The silence was chilling and profound, and had it not been for the light, Marius might have fancied himself next door to a grave.

He softly took off his boots and thrust them under the bed.

Several minutes elapsed, and then Marius heard the house door creak on its hinges; a heavy, rapid step ran up the stairs and along the passage; the hasp of the door was noisily raised,—it was Jondrette returning home.

All at once several voices were raised, and it was plain that the whole family were at home. They were merely silent in the master's absence, like young wolves in the absence of the father wolf.

"It is I," he said.

"Good-evening, pappy," yelped the girls.

"Well?" asked the wife.

"All is well," answered Jondrette; "but my feet are beastly cold. That's right; I am glad to see that you are dressed. You must inspire confidence."

"All ready to go out."

"You will not forget anything that I told you? You will do everything all right."

"Of course."

"Because —" Jondrette began, but did not complete the sentence.

Marius heard him lay something heavy on the table, probably the chisel which he had bought.

"Well," continued Jondrette, "have you been eating here?"

"Yes," said the mother; "I bought three large potatoes and some salt. I took advantage of the fire to roast them."

"Good!" remarked Jondrette; "to-morrow you shall dine with me. We will have a duck and trimmings. You shall feed like Charles the Tenth; all goes well!"

Then he added, lowering his voice: —

"The mouse-trap is open. The cats are here."

He again lowered his voice and said: —

"Put this in the fire."

Marius heard the clink of charcoal, stirred with a pair of tongs or some iron instrument, and Jondrette asked: —

"Have you greased the hinges of the door, so that they may make no noise?"

"Yes," answered the mother.

"What o'clock is it?"

"Close on six. It has struck the half-hour at St. Medard."

"The devil!" said Jondrette; "the girls must go on the watch. Come here and listen to me."

There was a whispering. Then Jondrette's voice was again uplifted: —

"Has Ma'am Bougon gone?"

"Yes," answered the mother.

"Are you sure there is nobody in the neighbour's room?"

"He has not come in all day, and you know very well that this is his dinner hour."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite."

"No matter," added Jondrette; "there is no harm in going to see whether he is in. Daughter, take the candle and go."

Marius fell on his hands and knees, and silently crawled under the bed.

He had scarcely done so when he saw a light through the cracks of his door.

"Papa!" exclaimed a voice, "he is out."

He recognized the elder girl's voice.

"Did you go into the room?" asked the father.

"No," replied the girl; "but as his key is in his door he must have gone out."

The father shouted:—

"Go in, all the same!"

The door opened, and Marius saw the girl enter, candle in hand. She was the same as in the morning, save that she was even more fearful in this light.

She walked straight up to the bed, and Marius suffered a moment of intense anxiety; but there was a looking-glass hanging from a nail near the bed, and it was to that she proceeded. She stood on tiptoe and looked at herself; a clatter of iron was heard in the other room.

She smoothed her hair with her hand, and smiled into the glass, singing, in her cracked and sepulchral voice:

"A week our love has lasted;
How soon our happiness is blasted!
To love a week will hardly pay;
Love should last forever and a day!
Forever and a day! forever and a day!"

Still Marius trembled, for he thought that she could not help hearing his breathing.

She walked to the window and looked out, saying aloud, with her half-foolish look:—

"How ugly Paris is when it has put on a white shirt!"

She returned to the glass, and began to grimace, studying herself, first full face, and then three quarters.

"Well!" cried her father, "what are you doing there?"

"I am looking under the bed and the furniture," she replied, continuing to smooth her hair; "but there is nobody here."

"You booby!" yelled her father. "Come here directly, and lose no time about it!"

"Coming, coming!" said she. "There's no time for anything in this hole!"

Then she hummed:—

"To glory you hasten, you leave me to pine;
On your steps will e'er follow this sad heart of mine!"

She cast a parting glance at the glass and went off, closing the door after her.

A moment later, Marius heard the sound of the two girls' naked feet pattering along the passage, and Jondrette's voice shouting to them:—

"Pay attention! one at the barrier, and the other at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier! Do not take your eyes off the door of this house for an instant; and if you see the slightest thing, rush back here at once as fast as you can come. You have a key to let yourselves in."

The elder daughter grumbled:—

"To stand sentry barefoot in the snow,—what a treat!"

"To-morrow you shall have bronze silk boots," said the father.

They went downstairs, and a few seconds later the sound of the door, as it closed below, announced that they had reached the street.

The only persons in the house now were Marius, the Jondrettes, and probably, too, the mysterious beings of whom Marius had caught a glimpse in the twilight, behind the door of the unoccupied room.

CHAPTER XVII

THE USE MADE OF MARIUS'S FIVE-FRANC PIECE

MARIUS decided that the moment had come for him to return to his observatory. In a second, and with the agility of his age, he was at the hole in the partition, and peeped through.

The interior of Jondrette's lodging presented a strange appearance, and Marius was able to account for the peculiar light he had noticed. A candle was burning in a verdigrised candlestick; but it was not this which really illumined the room: the whole den was lit up by the ruddy glow of a brazier standing in the fireplace, and filled with burning charcoal. It was the brazier which the wife had prepared in the morning. The charcoal glowed, the brazier was red-hot, bluish flames played round it and rendered it easy to recognize the shape of the chisel purchased by Jondrette, which was heating in the brazier. In one corner, near the door, were two heaps,—one apparently of old iron; the other of ropes, arranged for some definite purpose. All this, to a person who did not know what was about to occur, would have made his mind waver between a very simple and a very sinister idea. The room, thus lit up, resembled a forge rather than a mouth of hell; but Jondrette, in that light, was more like a demon than a blacksmith.

The heat of the brazier was so great that the candle on the table was melting and guttering on the side turned toward it. An old copper dark lantern, worthy of a Diogenes turned Cartouche, stood on the mantelpiece.

The brazier, placed directly in the fireplace, close to the smouldering logs, sent its smoke up the chimney, and thus produced no smell.

The moon, which found its way through the skylight, poured its whiteness into the crimson, flaming garret; and to

the poetic mind of Marius, who was a dreamer even in the moment of action, it was like a thought of heaven mingled with the shapeless dreams of earth.

A breath of air which entered through the broken pane also helped to dissipate the smell of charcoal and to conceal the presence of the brazier.

Jondrette's den, if our readers remember what we have said of the house, was admirably fitted to serve as the scene of a violent and dark deed, and as a covert for crime. It was the most remote room in the most solitary house on the most deserted boulevard in Paris. If ambushes had not existed, they would have been invented there.

The whole length of a house and a number of uninhabited rooms separated this lair from the boulevard, and the only window in it looked out on fields enclosed by walls and boardings.

Jondrette had lit his pipe, seated himself on the bottomless chair, and was smoking. His wife was talking to him in a low voice.

If Marius had been Courfeyrac,—that is to say, one of those men who laugh at every opportunity,—he would have burst into a roar when his eye fell on Mother Jondrette. She had on a black bonnet with feathers, something like the hats worn by the heralds at the coronation of Charles X., an immense tartan shawl over her knit skirt, and the man's shoes which her daughter had disdained in the morning. It was this attire which drew from Jondrette the exclamation: "That's right; I am glad to see that you are dressed. You must inspire confidence."

As for Jondrette, he had not taken off the new coat which M. Leblanc had given him, and his dress continued to offer that contrast between trousers and coat which constituted in Courfeyrac's sight the ideal of a poet.

All at once, Jondrette raised his voice.

"By the way! now that I think of it. In such weather as this, he will come in a hackney coach. Light your lantern, take it, and go down. Keep behind the front door. The

moment you hear the vehicle stop, you will open the door at once, light him upstairs and along the passage; and when he has come in here, you will go down as quickly as you can, pay the coachman, and discharge him."

"Where's the money to come from?" asked the woman.

Jondrette felt in his trousers-pocket, and gave her five francs.

"What is this?" she exclaimed.

He replied with dignity:—

"The monarch which our neighbour gave us this morning," and he added:—

"We shall want two chairs, though."

"What for?"

"Why, to sit on."

Marius shuddered as he heard the woman make the quiet answer:—

"Well, I will go and fetch our neighbour's."

And with a rapid movement she opened the door and stepped into the passage.

Marius absolutely had not the time to get off the drawers, reach the bed and hide under it.

"Take the candle," shouted Jondrette.

"No," said she, "it would bother me; I have the two chairs to carry. Besides, the moon is shining."

Marius heard the heavy hand of Mother Jondrette, fumbling with his key in the darkness. The door opened, and he remained nailed to his post by alarm and stupor.

The woman came in.

Through the dormer window fell a moonbeam between two large patches of shadow, and one of these patches, entirely covered the wall against which Marius leaned, so that he was invisible.

Mother Jondrette raised her eyes, did not see Marius, took the two chairs (the only two that Marius possessed), and went off noisily, slamming the door behind her.

She re-entered the den.

"Here are the two chairs."

"And here is the lantern," said her husband; "make haste down."

She obeyed quickly, and Jondrette remained alone.

He placed the chairs on either side of the table, turned the chisel in the brazier, placed in front of the fireplace an old screen, which concealed the charcoal-pan, and then went to the corner where the heap of rope lay, and stooped as if examining something. Marius then perceived that what he had taken for a shapeless mass, was a rope ladder, very well made, with wooden rungs, and two hooks to hang it by.

This ladder and a few large tools, regular crowbars, which were mingled with the heap of old iron behind the door, had not been there in the morning, and had evidently been brought in the afternoon, during the absence of Marius.

"They are smith's tools," thought Marius.

Had he been a little better acquainted with the trade, he would have recognized in what he took for tools, certain instruments for forcing or picking locks and others for cutting or slicing,—the two families of ill-omened tools known to burglars as "jemmys" and "scissors."

The fireplace, the table, and the two chairs were exactly opposite Marius. As the charcoal-pan was concealed, the room was only lighted by the candle. The smallest bit of crockery on the table or on the chimney-piece cast a long shadow; a cracked water-jug hid half a wall. There was a hideous and menacing calm about the room; one felt that something awful was at hand.

Jondrette had let his pipe go out,—a sign of deep thought,—and had just sat down again. The candle made the fierce crafty lines of his face stand out in bold relief; he frowned, and suddenly thrust out his right hand, as if in answer to the final counsels of a dark inward soliloquy. In one of the obscure replies which he made to himself, he opened the table drawer, took out a long carving-knife hidden there, and felt its edge with his thumb-nail. This done, he put the knife back in the drawer, and closed it.

Marius, on his side, grasped the pistol in his right hand

pocket, drew it out and cocked it. As he did so, the pistol gave a sharp, quick click.

Jondrette started, and half rose from his chair.

"Who's there?" he shouted.

Marius held his breath. Jondrette listened for a moment, and then said, laughingly:—

"What an ass I am! It was only the wall cracking."

Marius kept the pistol in his hand.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TWO CHAIRS OPPOSITE EACH OTHER

SUDDENLY, the distant and melancholy vibration of a bell shook the window-panes; six o'clock was striking at St. Medard's.

Jondrette marked each stroke with a toss of his head; and when he had counted the sixth, he snuffed the candle with his fingers.

Then he began to pace up and down the room, listened in the passage-way, began to walk again, and then listened once more.

"Provided he comes," he growled, and then returned to his chair.

He was hardly seated when the door opened.

Mother Jondrette had opened it, and remained in the passage making a horrible grimace, which one of the holes in the dark lantern lit up from below.

"Step in, sir," said she.

"Enter, my benefactor!" repeated Jondrette, as he hurriedly rose.

M. Leblanc appeared. He had a serene look, which rendered him singularly venerable.

He laid four louis on the table.

"Monsieur Fabantou, here is the money for your rent, and your first necessities. After that, we will see."

"May heaven repay you, my generous benefactor!" said Jondrette.

Then rapidly approaching his wife:—

"Dismiss the hackney coach."

She slipped away, while the husband lavished bows and offered a chair to M. Leblanc. A moment later, she returned and whispered in his ear:—

"All right."

The snow which had not ceased falling since morning, was now so thick that neither the arrival nor the departure of the cab had been heard.

M. Leblanc had seated himself, and Jondrette now took possession of the chair opposite to him.

And now the reader, in order to form an idea of the scene which is about to be enacted, will kindly imagine the freezing night, the solitudes of the Salpêtrière, covered with snow and white as an immense winding-sheet in the moonlight, the street lamps throwing a red glow here and there over the tragic boulevards and the long rows of black elms, not a passer-by for a quarter of a league round, and the Gorbeau House at its highest pitch of silence, horror, and night. In that house, amid that solitude and darkness, Jondrette's spacious garret, lit by a single candle, and in that den two men sitting at a table,—M. Leblanc calm, Jondrette smiling and terrible; Mother Jondrette, the she-wolf, in a corner; and behind the party-wall, Marius, invisible, upright, losing not a word or a movement, his eye on the watch and pistols in hand.

Marius, however, felt an emotion of horror only, no fear; he clutched the pistol and was reassured. "I can stop the scoundrel whenever I like," he thought.

He knew that the police were somewhere in ambush, waiting for the appointed signal, and ready to stretch out their arm.

Moreover, he hoped that this violent encounter between Jondrette and M. Leblanc might throw some light on all that he had an interest in knowing.

CHAPTER XIX

DARK DEPTHS

M. LEBLANC was no sooner seated than he turned his eyes to the beds, which were empty.

"How is the poor little wounded girl?" he asked.

"Very bad," replied Jondrette, with a heart-broken and grateful smile. "Very bad, my good sir. Her elder sister has taken her to La Bourbe to have her hand dressed. But you will see them; they will return immediately."

"Madame Fabantou looks better," continued M. Leblanc, glancing at the strange garb of Mother Jondrette, who, standing between him and the door, as if already guarding the outlet, looked at him in a menacing and almost combative posture.

"She is dying," said Jondrette; "but what would you have, sir? That woman has so much courage. She is not a woman, she's an ox."

Mother Jondrette, touched by the compliment, protested with the airs of a flattered monster:—

"You are always too kind to me, Monsieur Jondrette."

"Jondrette?" said M. Leblanc; "why, I thought your name was Fabantou."

"Fabantou, *alias* Jondrette," quickly replied the husband,—"a professional name."

And giving his wife a shrug of the shoulders, which M. Leblanc did not see, he continued with an emphatic and caressing inflection of voice:—

"Ah! that poor dear and I have ever lived happily together.

What would be left us if we had not that! We are so wretched, respectable sir. We have strong arms, but no work, willing hearts, but no work. I do not know how the Government manage it, on my word of honour, sir, I am no Jacobin; I am no lush-crib.¹ I wish them no harm; but if I were the ministers, on my most sacred word, things would go differently. For instance, I wanted my daughters to learn the paper-box trade. You will say, 'What! a trade?' Yes, a trade,—a mere trade, a livelihood. What a fall, my benefactor! What degradation, after one has been in such circumstances as we were; but alas! nothing is left us from our prosperous days. Nothing but one thing,—a picture, to which I cling, but which I am ready to part with; for we must live."

As Jondrette said this with a sort of apparent incoherence, which did not in any way detract from the thoughtful and sagacious expression of his face, Marius raised his eyes and saw some one at the back of the room, whom he had not seen before. A man had just entered, but so softly that the hinges did not creak. This man had on an old worn-out, torn, stained, knitted, violet jacket, gaping at every seam, loose velveteen trousers, list slippers on his feet, and no shirt; his neck was bare, his tattooed arms were bare, and his face was daubed with black. He seated himself silently, with folded arms, on the nearest bed; and as he was behind Mother Jondrette, he could be but indistinctly seen.

That sort of magnetic instinct which warns the eye caused M. Leblanc to turn almost at the same moment as Marius. He could not suppress a start of surprise, which Jondrette noticed.

"Ah, I see," exclaimed Jondrette, as he buttoned his coat complacently, "you are looking at your overcoat? It fits me,—really fits me capitally."

"Who is that man?" asked M. Leblanc.

"That?" said Jondrette; "oh, a neighbour. Pay no attention to him."

¹ Term of contempt applied to Republicans in 1848.

The neighbour looked singular; but chemical factories abound in the Faubourg St. Marceau, and a workman may easily have a black face.

M. Leblanc's whole person breathed candid and intrepid confidence. He continued:—

"I beg your pardon, but what were you saying, M. Fabantou?"

"I was saying, sir, and dear protector," replied Jondrette, placing his elbows on the table and gazing at M. Leblanc with fixed and tender eyes, very like those of a boa-constrictor, "I was saying that I had a picture to sell."

There was a slight noise at the door; a second man entered, and seated himself on the bed, behind Mother Jondrette.

Like the first, he had bare arms and a mask, either of ink or soot.

Though this man literally glided into the room he could not prevent M. Leblanc from noticing him.

"Take no heed," said Jondrette; "they are men who live in the house. I was saying that I had a valuable picture left. Look here, sir."

He rose, went to the wall, against which the panel to which we have already referred was leaning, and turned it round, still letting it rest against the wall. It was really something resembling a picture, which the candle almost illumined. Marius could distinguish nothing, as Jondrette stood between him and the picture, but he merely caught a glimpse of a coarse daub, and a sort of principal personage smeared in with the bold crudity of a showman's pictures or a sign-board.

"What is that?" asked M. Leblanc.

Jondrette exclaimed:—

"A masterpiece, a most valuable picture, my benefactor. I am as much attached to it as I am to my daughters, for it recalls dear memories; but, as I told you, and I will not go back from my word, I am willing to dispose of it, as we are so poor."

Either by accident, or from some vague feeling of uneasiness, M. Leblanc's eye, while examining the picture, returned to the end of the room.

There were now four men, three seated on the bed and one leaning against the door-post, but all four bare-armed, motionless, and with blackened faces. One of those on the bed was leaning against the wall, with closed eyes, and apparently asleep; he was old, and the white hair against the blackened face produced a horrible effect. The other two were young; one was hairy, the other bearded. Not a single one had shoes; those who did not wear list slippers were barefooted.

Jondrette observed that M. Leblanc's eyes rested on these men.

"They are friends, neighbours," he said; "their faces are black because they work in charcoal. They are smoke-doctors.¹ Don't mind them, sir, but buy my picture. Have pity on my misery. I will not ask much for it. How much do you think it is worth?"

"Well," said M. Leblanc, looking Jondrette full in the face, like a man on his guard, "it is some pot-house sign, and worth about three francs."

Jondrette replied gently:—

"Have you your pocket-book about you? I shall be satisfied with a thousand crowns."

M. Leblanc rose, set his back against the wall, and took a hurried glance round the room. He had Jondrette on his left by the window, and on his right, the woman and the four men by the door. The four men did not stir, and did not even appear to see him.

Jondrette began to talk again in a plaintive tone and with such a wandering eye that M. Leblanc might fairly believe that he had before him simply a man driven mad by misery.

"If you do not buy my picture, dear benefactor," said Jondrette, "I have no resource remaining; and nothing is left me but to throw myself into the river. When I think that I wanted my two daughters to learn how to make paper

¹ Chimney-sweeps.

boxes for New-Year's gifts. Well, for that you need a table with a backboard to prevent the glasses from falling off, a special kind of stove, a pot with three compartments for the different degrees of strength of the glue, according as it is used for wood, paper, or cloth; a knife to cut the pasteboard, a mould to adjust it, a hammer, a pair of pincers, and the deuce knows what. And all that to earn four sous a day! and you must work fourteen hours! and every box passes thirteen times through the hands of the work-girl! and no moistening the paper! and no spoiling anything! and keeping the glue hot! the devil! I tell you, four sous a day! How do you expect us to live?"

As he spoke, Jondrette did not look at M. Leblanc, who was watching him. M. Leblanc's eye was fixed on Jondrette, and Jondrette's on the door, while Marius's breathless attention went from one to the other. M. Leblanc seemed to be asking himself, "Is he a lunatic?" and Jondrette repeated twice or thrice, with all sorts of varied inflections in the suppliant style: "All that is left me is to throw myself into the river! The other day I went down three steps at the side of the bridge of Austerlitz on purpose."

All at once his dull eyes glistened with a hideous light; the little man drew himself up and became frightful. He took a step toward M. Leblanc and shouted in a voice of thunder: —

"That is not the point! Do you recognize me?"

CHAPTER XX

THE TRAP

THE attic door was flung open, and revealed three men in blue linen blouses and wearing masks of black paper. The first was thin, and carried a long iron-shod cudgel; the second, who was a sort of colossus, carried by the middle, with

the blade down, a pole-axe such as butchers use to slaughter cattle. The third, a broad-shouldered fellow, not so thin as the first, but not so stout as the second, was armed with an enormous key stolen from some prison gate.

It seemed as if Jondrette had been awaiting the arrival of these men. A hurried conversation took place between him and the man with the cudgel,—the thin one.

“Is everything ready?” asked Jondrette.

“Yes,” replied the thin man.

“Where is Montparnasse?”

“He stopped to talk with your eldest daughter.”

“Is there a cab below?”

“Yes.”

“Is the wagon ready, harnessed?”

“Yes.”

“With two good horses?”

“Excellent.”

“Is it waiting where I ordered?”

“Yes.”

“All right,” said Jondrette.

M. Leblanc was very pale. He looked all round the room like a man who understands into what a snare he has fallen, and his head, turned toward all the heads that surrounded him, moved on his shoulders with an attentive and surprised slowness; but there was nothing in his appearance that resembled fear. He had formed an improvised bulwark of the table; and this man, who a moment before merely looked like a good old man, had suddenly become an athlete, and laid his sturdy fist on the back of his chair with a terrible and surprising gesture.

This old man, so firm and brave in the presence of such danger, seemed to possess one of those natures which are courageous as they are good,—easily and simply. The father of a woman we love is never a stranger to us, and Marius felt proud of this unknown man.

Three of the men whom Jondrette called “smoke-doctors” had taken from the mass of iron, one a large chisel, another

a pair of heavy pincers, and the third a hammer, and posted themselves in the doorway, without saying a word. The old man remained on the bed, merely opening his eyes; and Mother Jondrette was sitting by his side.

Marius thought that the moment for interference had come, and raised his right hand to the ceiling, in the direction of the passage, ready to fire his pistol. Jondrette, having finished his colloquy with the three men, again turned to M. Leblanc, and repeated his question, with that low, restrained, and terrible laugh of his: —

“Do you not recognize me?”

M. Leblanc looked him in the face and answered: —

“No.”

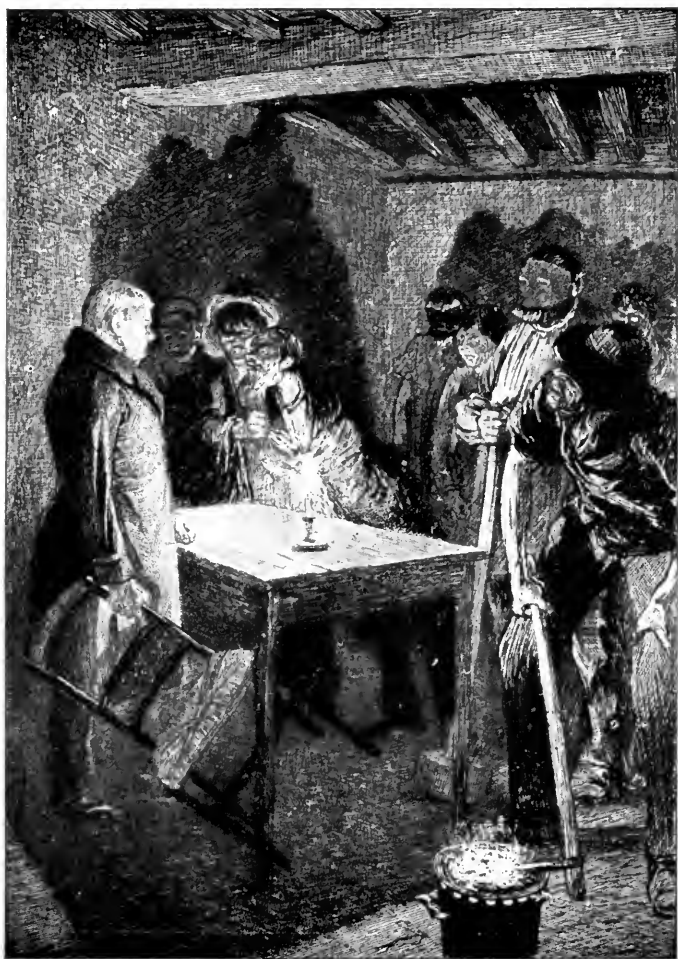
Jondrette then went up to the table. He bent over the candle with folded arms, and placed his angular and ferocious jaw as close as he could to M. Leblanc's placid face, advancing as far as he could, without forcing M. Leblanc to retreat; and in this posture of a wild beast about to bite he exclaimed: —

“My name is not Fabantou, my name is not Jondrette; my name is Thénardier. I am the landlord of the inn at Montfermeil! Do you hear me? Thénardier! Now do you recognize me?”

An almost imperceptible flush shot athwart M. Leblanc's brow, and he answered, with his usual placidity, and without the slightest tremor in his voice: —

“No more than before.”

Marius did not hear this answer. Any one who had seen him at that moment in the darkness would have seen that he was haggard, stunned, and bewildered. When Jondrette said, “My name is Thénardier,” Marius trembled in every limb, and leaned against the wall, as if a cold sword-blade had been thrust through his heart. Then his right hand, raised in readiness to fire, dropped slowly; and when Jondrette repeated, “Do you hear me? Thénardier!” Marius's relaxing fingers almost let the pistol fall. Jondrette, by revealing his true name, did not affect M. Leblanc, but he stunned Marius;



"My name is not Fabanton, my name is not Jondrette; my name is Thénardier. I am the landlord of the inn at Montfermeil."

Les Misérables. Marius: Page 244.

for he knew that name of Thénardier, which was apparently unknown to M. Leblanc. Only remember what that name meant to him! He had carried it in his heart; it was recorded in his father's will! He bore it in his innermost thoughts, in the deepest shrine of his memory, in the sacred injunction, "A man of the name of Thénardier saved my life; if my son meet this man, let him do all he can for him." This name, it will be remembered, was one of the pieties of his soul, and he mingled it with his father's name in his prayers. What! This man was Thénardier, the landlord of Montfermeil, whom he had so long and so vainly sought! He had found him at last, and how? His father's saviour was a bandit! The man to whom Marius burned to devote his life was a monster! The liberator of Colonel Pontmercy was on the point of committing a crime, whose scope Marius did not yet fully comprehend, but which resembled an assassination! And of whom? Great heavens, what a fatality, what a bitter mockery of fate! His father commanded him from his tomb to do all in his power for Thénardier. For four years Marius had had no other idea but to pay this debt of his father's; and at the very moment that he was about to deliver over to justice a brigand caught in the act of crime, destiny cried out: "It is Thénardier!" He was at length about to requite this man for saving his father's life, amid a hail-storm of grape-shot, on the heroic field of Waterloo by sending him to the scaffold! He had vowed that, if ever he found this Thénardier, he would throw himself at his feet; and he had found him indeed, but only to hand him over to the executioner! His father said to him, "Help Thénardier:" and he was about to answer that adored and sacred voice by crushing Thénardier! To offer his father in his grave the spectacle of the man who had dragged him from death, at the peril of his own life, executed on the Place St. Jacques, by the agency of his son, that Marius to whom he bequeathed that man! And then, what a mockery it was to have so long worn on his heart the last wishes of his father, only to do exactly the contrary! But, on the other hand, how could he

look on at murder, and not prevent it? What! should he condemn the victim and spare the assassin? Could he be bound by any ties of gratitude to such a villain? All the ideas which Marius had cherished for four years were, as it were, pierced through and through by this unexpected stroke.

He trembled. Everything depended on him. He held in his hands the unconscious beings who were moving before his eyes. If he fired the pistol, M. Leblanc was saved and Thénardier lost. If he did not fire, M. Leblanc would be sacrificed and Thénardier might perhaps escape. Should he hunt down the one, or let the other fall? Remorse would follow him in either case.

What should he do? Which course should he choose? Be false to the most imperious recollections, to the many solemn pledges taken to himself, to the most sacred duty, to the most venerated commands, disobey his father's will, or allow a crime to be accomplished? On one side he fancied he could hear "his Ursula" imploring him to save her father; on the other, the colonel recommending Thénardier to his care. He felt as if he were going mad. His knees gave way under him, and he had not even time to deliberate, as the scene he had before him was being performed with such furious precipitation. It was a tornado of which he had fancied himself the master, but which was sweeping him away. He was on the verge of fainting.

Meantime, Thénardier (as we shall henceforth call him) was walking up and down before the table, in a sort of wild and frenzied triumph.

He seized the candlestick and placed it on the chimney-piece with such a violent bang that the candle nearly went out, and the tallow spattered the wall.

Then he turned furiously on M. Leblanc and spat forth these words:—

"Done brown! whipped! in an awful fix! spatch-cocked!"

And he began to march up and down in full eruption.

"Ah," he cried, "so I have found you again, at last, my fine philanthropist; my millionaire with the thread-bare coat!

You giver of dolls! you old niggard! Ah, you do not recognize me. I suppose it wasn't you who came to my inn at Montfermeil just eight years ago, on Christmas eve, 1823! It wasn't you who carried off Fantine's child, the Lark! it wasn't you who had a yellow watchman's coat! No! nor a parcel of clothes in your hand, just as you had this morning. Look here, wife! He seems to have a mania for carrying bundles of woollen stockings to people's houses, the charitable old humbug! Are you a hosier, Mr. Millionaire! You give your stock in trade to the poor; what a holy man! what a mountebank! Ah, you do not recognize me! Well, I recognize you. I knew you the minute you thrust your muzzle in here. Ah, you will find out that it is not a blooming game to go like that to people's houses, under the excuse that they are inns, with such a wretched coat and poverty-stricken look that they feel inclined to give you a sou, and then to play the generous, rob them of their bread-winner, and threaten them in the woods; and you won't get off by bringing people afterward, when they are ruined, a coat that is too large, and two paltry hospital blankets, you old scamp, you child-stealer!"

He stopped, and for a moment seemed to be speaking to himself. It appeared as if his fury had fallen into some hole, like the Rhone. Then, as if finishing aloud the things he had just been saying to himself in a whisper, he struck the table with his fist, and cried: —

"With his simple look!"

Then he apostrophized M. Leblanc: —

"By heaven! you made a fool of me once. You are the cause of all my misfortune. You got for fifteen hundred francs a girl who certainly belonged to rich people, who had already brought me in a deal of money, and from whom I ought to have got enough to live upon the rest of my life! That girl would have made up to me all I lost in that wretched pot-house, where there was nothing but rows, and where I ate up all my blessed savings like an ass! Oh, I wish that all the wine that was swallowed in my house were poison to

those who drank it! However, no matter! Tell me! I suppose you thought me a precious fool when you went off with the Lark. You had your cudgel in the forest. You were the stronger. To-day I shall have my revenge, for I hold all the trumps; you are done for, my good fellow. Oh, how I laugh, when I think how he fell into the trap! I told him that I was an actor, that my name was Fabantou, that I had played with Mamselle Mars, with Mamselle Muche, and that my landlord insisted on being paid the next day; and he did not even remember that January 8, and not February 4, is quarter-day. Absurd idiot! And these four paltry Philippes which he brought me! old hunks! He had not the heart to go as high as five hundred francs; and how he swallowed my platitudes! That did amuse me! I said to myself, 'There's an ass for you!' Well, I have got you. This morning I licked your paws, and to-night I shall gnaw your heart!"

Thénardier stopped, out of breath. His little narrow chest panted like a forge-bellows. His eyes were full of the ignoble happiness of a weak, cruel and cowardly creature, who is at length able to trample on the man he feared, and insult him whom he flattered. The joy of a dwarf setting his heel on the head of Goliath, the joy of a jackal beginning to rend a sick bull, dead enough to be unable to defend itself, but still alive enough to suffer. M. Leblanc did not interrupt him, but said, when he ceased speaking:—

"I do not know what you mean. You are mistaken. I am a very poor man, and anything but a millionaire. I do not know you. You mistake me for somebody else."

"Ah," said Thénardier hoarsely, "a fine dodge! So you stick to that joke, eh, old fellow? You've made a nice mess of it! Ah, you do not remember! You do not see who I am!"

"Pardon me, sir," replied M. Leblanc, in a polite tone, which had something strange and grand about it at such a moment, "I see that you are a villain."

Who has not noticed the fact that odious beings possess a

susceptibility of their own, and that monsters are ticklish. At the word "villain," Mother Thénardier leaped from the bed, and her husband clutched his chair as if about to break it in his hand. "Don't stir, you!" he shouted to his wife, and then turning to M. Leblanc:—

"'Villain!' Yes, I know that you rich swells call us so. It is true, I am a bankrupt. I am in hiding, I have no bread, I have not a sou, and I am a villain! For three days I have eaten nothing, and I am a villain! Ah, you fellows warm your toes, you wear pumps made by Sakoski, you have wadded coats like archbishops, you live on the first-floors of houses where a porter is kept, you eat truffles, asparagus at forty francs the bunch in January, and green peas. You stuff yourselves; and when you want to know whether it is cold, you look in the newspapers to see what Chevalier's thermometer marks; but we, we are our own thermometers. We have no call to go and look at the corner of the Jour d'Horloge to see how many degrees of cold there are, for we feel the blood freeze in our veins and the ice form round our hearts; and we say, 'There is no God!' and you come into our caverns, — yes, our caverns,—to call us villains! But we will eat you, we will devour you, poor little chaps! Mr. Millionaire, learn this: I was a solid, settled man, I held a license, I was an elector, and am still a citizen, while you, perhaps are not!"

Here Thénardier advanced a step toward the men near the door, and added with a shudder:—

"When I think that he dares to come and address me like a cobbler—"

Then turning upon M. Leblanc with a fresh outburst of frenzy:—

"And know this, too, Mr. Philanthropist, I am not one of your equivocal characters, not I! I am not a man whose name nobody knows, and who comes and carries off children from houses! I am an old French soldier, and I ought to have the cross! I was at Waterloo, I was; and in the battle I saved the life of a general called Count Something-or-other. He told me his name, but his beastly voice was so weak that

I did not catch it. I only caught *Mercy*! His name would have been better than his thanks. It would have helped me to find him. The picture that you see, which was painted by David at Bruqueselles,—do you know whom it represents? It represents me; for David wished to immortalize that exploit. I have the general on my back, and I am carrying him through the grape-shot. That is the story! The general never did anything for me. He was no better than the rest! But, for all that, I saved his life at the peril of my own, and I have my pockets filled with certificates of the fact. I am a soldier of Waterloo, by all that's holy! And now that I have had the goodness to tell you all this let us have an end of it. I want money, I want a deal of money, an enormous amount of money, or I shall exterminate you, by the thunder of heaven!"

Marius had gained a little control over his agony, and was listening. The last possibility of doubt had vanished. It was really the Thénardier of the will. Marius shuddered at the charge of ingratitude cast at his father, and which he was on the point of so fatally justifying. His perplexities were redoubled.

Besides, there was in Thénardier's every word, in his accent and gestures, in his glance, which darted flames at every word, in this outburst of an evil nature revealing everything, in that admixture of boasting and abjectness, pride and meanness, rage and folly, in that chaos of real griefs and false sentiments, in that impudence of a wicked man enjoying the delights of violence, in that shameless nudity of an ugly soul, and in that conflagration of all possible suffering, combined, with all possible hatred, something which was as hideous as evil and as poignant as truth.

The masterpiece — the picture by David which he offered M. Leblanc — was, as the reader will have guessed, nought else than his public-house sign, painted by himself, and the sole relic he had preserved from his ship-wreck at Montfermeil.

As he had stepped aside, Marius was now enabled to look

at this thing; and in the daub he really recognized a battle, a background of smoke, and one man carrying another. It was the group of Thénardier and Pontmercy,—the saviour sergeant and the rescued colonel. Marius felt as if intoxicated; for this picture in some sort represented his loving father. It was no longer an inn sign-board, but a resurrection; a tomb had opened, a phantom had risen. Marius's heart throbbed in his temples. The guns of Waterloo sounded in his ears; his bleeding father, vaguely depicted on that ill-omened board, terrified him, and he fancied that the shapeless figure gazed fixedly at him.

When Thénardier regained his breath, he fastened his blood-shot eyes on M. Leblanc, and said in a low, sharp voice:—

“What have you to say before we put the screw on you?”

M. Leblanc was silent.

In the midst of this silence a husky voice launched this mournful sarcasm from the passage:—

“If there's any wood to be chopped, I'm your man.”

It was the fellow with the pole-axe, amusing himself.

At the same time, an immense, hairy, earth-coloured face appeared in the doorway, with a frightful grin which displayed not teeth but tusks.

It was the face of the man with the pole-axe.

“Why have you taken off your mask?” Thénardier asked furiously.

“For fun,” answered the man.

For some minutes past, M. Leblanc had seemed to be watching and following every movement of Thénardier, who, blinded and bewildered by his own rage, strode up and down the room, confident in the knowledge that the door was guarded, that his victim was unarmed, while he was armed, and that there nine against one, even supposing that his wife counted for only one man.

In his speech to the man with the pole-axe, he turned his back to M. Leblanc.

M. Leblanc took advantage of the opportunity, upset the

chair with his foot, the table with his fist, and with one bound, before Thénardier had time to turn, he was at the window. To open it and bestride the sill was the work of a second. He was half out when six powerful hands grasped him and energetically dragged him back into the room. The three "smoke-doctors" had rushed upon him, and at the same time Mother Thénardier seized him by the hair.

At the noise which ensued, the other ruffians ran in from the passage, and the old man on the bed, who seemed the worse for liquor, descended from his couch and tottered up, with a road-mender's hammer in his hand.

One of the "smoke-doctors," whose smeared face was lighted up by the candle, and in whom Marius recognized, in spite of the blackening, Panchaud, *alias* Printanier, *alias* Bigrenaille, raised above M. Leblanc's head a sort of bludgeon made of two lumps of lead at the end of an iron bar.

Marius could not endure the sight. "My father," he thought, "forgive me!" and his finger sought the trigger.

He was on the point of firing when Thénardier cried:

"Do not hurt him!"

This desperate attempt of the victim, far from exasperating Thénardier, had calmed him.

There were two men in him,—the ferocious man and the adroit man. Up to this moment, in the exuberance of triumph, in presence of his motionless prey, the ferocious man had prevailed. When the victim struggled and strove to resist, the adroit man reappeared and gained the mastery.

"Do him no harm!" he repeated; and his first victory was, though he little suspected it, to arrest the discharge of the pistol and to paralyze Marius, to whom the affair did not now appear so urgent, and who in the presence of this new phase saw no harm in waiting a little longer.

Who knows whether some accident might not occur which would deliver him from the frightful alternative of letting Ursula's father perish or of destroying the colonel's saviour?

A herculean struggle had begun. With one blow of his fist full in the chest, M. Leblanc sent the old man rolling in

the middle of the room, and then with two back-handers knocked down two other assailants, and held one under each of his knees. The villains gasped under this pressure as under a granite mill-stone, but the other four had seized the formidable old man by the arms and neck and were holding him down upon the two "smoke-doctors."

Thus, master of some, and mastered by others, crushing those beneath him, and stifled by those above him, vainly trying to shake off all the efforts heaped upon him, M. Leblanc disappeared beneath this horrible group of bandits, like a wild boar beneath a howling pack of dogs and hounds.

They succeeded in throwing him upon the bed nearest the window, and there they held him in awe. Mother Thénardier did not once let go his hair.

"Don't you interfere," said Thénardier; "you will tear your shawl."

The woman obeyed, as the she-wolf obeys her mate, with a snarl.

"You fellows," continued Thénardier, "search him."

M. Leblanc appeared to have given up all thought of resistance, and they searched him.

He had nothing about him but a leather purse containing six francs, and his handkerchief.

Thénardier put the handkerchief in his own pocket.

"What! no pocket-book?" he asked.

"No; and no watch," replied one of the "smoke-doctors."

"No matter," muttered the masked man who held the large key, in the voice of a ventriloquist, "he is a tough old bird."

Thénardier went to the corner near the door, and picked up a bundle of rope, which he threw to the men.

"Tie him to the leg of the bed," he said.

Then noticing the old man whom M. Leblanc had stretched across the room with a blow of his fist, and who was still motionless on the floor, he asked:—

"Is Boulatruelle dead?"

"No," answered Bigrenaille; "he's drunk."

"Sweep him into a corner," said Thénardier.

Two of the "smoke-doctors" thrust the drunkard with their feet toward the heap of old iron.

"Babet, why did you bring so many?" said Thénardier, in a whisper, to the man with the cudgel; "it was unnecessary."

"How could I help it? They all wanted to be in it," answered the man. "The season is bad, and there's nothing doing."

The bed upon which M. Leblanc had been thrown was a sort of hospital bed on four clumsy wooden legs.

M. Leblanc offered no resistance.

The ruffians tied him firmly, in an upright posture, with his feet on the ground, at the end of the bed farthest from the window and nearest to the chimney-piece.

When the last knot was tied, Thénardier took a chair and sat down almost facing the prisoner.

He was no longer the same man. In a few minutes his countenance had passed from frenzied violence to quiet and crafty gentleness.

Marius found it hard to recognize in this polite smile of a man in official life the almost bestial mouth which had been foaming a moment previous. He gazed with amazement at this fantastic and alarming change; and he felt as a man might feel who should see a tiger turned into an attorney.

"Sir," said Thénardier, and dismissing with a sign the bandits who still held M. Leblanc:—

"Stand off a little and leave me to talk with the gentleman," he said.

All withdrew to the door, and he resumed:—

"You did wrong to try to jump out of the window, for you might have broken a leg. Now, with your permission, we will talk quietly. In the first place, I must tell you one thing I have noticed; that is, that you have not yet uttered the slightest cry."

Thénardier was right. This detail was correct, although it had escaped Marius in his agitation. M. Leblanc had merely said a few words without raising his voice; and even

in his struggle near the window with the six bandits, he had preserved the most profound and singular silence.

Thénardier went on:—

“Good heavens! You might have shouted: ‘Thieves!’ and I should not have thought it improper. Such a thing as ‘Murder!’ is sometimes shouted on such occasions. I should not have taken it in ill part. It is very natural that a man should make a bit of a row when he finds himself with persons who do not inspire him with sufficient confidence. If you had done so, we should not have interfered with you or thought of gagging you; and I will tell you why. This room is very deaf. It has only that in its favour, but it has that. It is a cellar; you might fire off a bomb-shell here, and it would produce no more effect than a drunkard’s snore at the nearest police-station. Here cannon would go ‘boom!’ and thunder be a mere puff. It is a convenient lodging. But still you did not cry out. All the better; and I compliment you on it, and will tell you what conclusion I draw from the fact. My dear sir, when a man cries for help, who come? The police. And after the police? Justice. Well, you did not cry out, and so you are no more desirous than we are for the arrival of the police. The fact is,—and I have suspected it for some time,—that you have some interest in hiding something. For our part, we have the same interest. So we may be able to come to an understanding.”

As he said this, Thénardier tried to drive the sharp points that darted from his eyes into his prisoner’s conscience. Besides, his language, marked with a sort of moderate and cunning insolence, was reserved and almost choice; and in this villain, who was just before only a bandit, could now be seen “the man who had studied for the priesthood.”

The silence maintained by the prisoner, the precaution which went so far as to forget all care for his life, his resistance, so opposed to the first impulse of Nature, which is to utter a cry, troubled and painfully amazed Marius so soon as his attention was drawn to it.

Thénardier’s well-founded remark but rendered denser the

mysterious gloom behind which was concealed the grave and peculiar figure to whom Courfeyrac had given the sobriquet of M. Leblanc.

But, whoever this man might be, though bound with cords, surrounded by bandits, and half buried, so to speak, in a grave which was closing over him at every step,—whether in the presence of Thénardier furious or of Thénardier gentle,—he remained impassive; and Marius could not refrain from admiring his superbly melancholy visage at such a moment.

His was evidently a soul inaccessible to terror, and ignorant of what it is to despair. He was one of those men who dominate the amazement produced by desperate situations. However extreme the crisis might be, however inevitable the catastrophe, he had none of the agony of the drowning man who opens horror-stricken eyes under the water.

Thénardier rose without any affectation, removed the screen from before the fireplace, and thus unmasked the brazier full of burning charcoal, in which the prisoner could plainly see the chisel at a white heat and studded here and there with small red stars.

Then he returned to his seat.

“To continue,” he said.

“We can come to an understanding. Let us settle this amicably. I did wrong to let my temper carry me away just now; I do not know where my senses were. I went much too far and uttered absurdities. For instance, because you are a millionaire, I told you that I must have money, a great deal of money, an immense sum of money. That was unreasonable. Good heavens! you may be rich, but you have burdens,—who has not? I do not wish to ruin you; for I am no extortioner, after all. I am not one of those men who, because they have the advantage, use it to make themselves ridiculous. Come, I will make a sacrifice on my side, and be satisfied with two hundred thousand francs.”

M. Leblanc did not utter a syllable.

Thénardier continued:—

“You see that I put plenty of water in my wine. I do

not know the amount of your fortune, but I do know that you do not care for money; and a benevolent man like you can easily give two hundred thousand francs to the unfortunate father of a family. Of course, you are reasonable too. You cannot have supposed that I would take all the trouble I have to-day, and would get up this affair to-night, which is a good job, in the opinion of these gentlemen, merely to end up by asking you for enough money to go and drink fifteen-sous wine and eat veal at Desnoyer's. But two hundred thousand francs,—that's worth the trouble. Once that trifle has come out of your pocket, I will guarantee that you have nothing more to apprehend. You will say, 'But I have not two hundred thousand francs about me.' Oh, I am not exorbitant, I do not insist on that. I only ask one thing of you. Be good enough to write what I shall dictate."

Here Thénardier stopped, but added, laying a stress on the words, and casting a smile at the brazier:—

"I warn you that I shall not accept the excuse that you don't know how to write."

A grand inquisitor might have envied that smile.

Thénardier pushed the table close up to M. Leblanc, and took pen, ink, and paper out of the drawer, which he left half open, and in which glittered the long knife-blade.

He laid the sheet of paper before M. Leblanc.

"Write!" he said.

The prisoner spoke at last.

"How can you expect me to write? My arms are tied."

"That is true; I beg your pardon," said Thénardier.

"You are quite right."

And turning to Bigrenaille he added:—

"Unfasten the gentleman's right arm."

Panchaud, *alias* Printanier, *alias* Bigrenaille, obeyed Thénardier's orders.

When the prisoner's hand was free, Thénardier dipped the pen in the ink and handed it to him.

"Make up your mind, sir, that you are in our power,—at our mercy. No human power can liberate you; and we

should really be sorry to be forced to proceed to disagreeable extremities. I know neither your name nor your address; but I warn you that you will remain tied up here until the person commissioned to deliver the letter you are about to write has returned. Now be good enough to write."

"What?" asked the prisoner.

Thénardier began to dictate: "My daughter—"

The prisoner started, and raised his eyes to Thénardier, who went on:—

"Put 'My dear daughter,'" said Thénardier.

M. Leblanc obeyed.

Thénardier continued:—

"Come at once."

He paused:—

"You call her your daughter, don't you?"

"Who?" asked M. Leblanc.

"Zounds!" cried Thénardier, "the little one, the Lark."

M. Leblanc replied without a sign of emotion:—

"I don't know what you mean."

"Go on, all the same," said Thénardier; and he resumed his dictation:—

"Come to me at once, for I have pressing need of you. The person who delivers this letter to you has instructions to bring you to me. I am waiting. Come in perfect confidence."

M. Leblanc wrote this down.

Thénardier resumed:—

"By the way, scratch out 'Come in perfect confidence,' for it might lead her to suppose that the affair is not perfectly natural, and create distrust."

M. Leblanc erased the words.

"Now," added Thénardier, "sign it. What is your name?"

The prisoner laid down the pen, and asked:—

"For whom is this letter?"

"You know very well," answered Thénardier; "for the little one. I just told you so."

It was evident that Thénardier avoided mentioning the name of the girl in question. He called her "the Lark," he called her "the little one," but did not pronounce her name.

It was the precaution of a clever man who guards his secret from his accomplices. To mention the name would be to tell them the whole "affair," and to teach them more than there was any occasion for them to know.

So he repeated:—

"Sign it. What is your name?"

"Urbain Fabre," said the prisoner.

Thénardier, with the movement of a cat, thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out the handkerchief found on M. Leblanc. He sought for the mark, and held it to the candle.

"U. F.: all right. Urbain Fabre. Well, sign it U. F."

The prisoner did so.

"As two hands are needed to fold a letter, give it to me and I will do so."

This done, Thénardier added:—

"Address it, 'Mademoiselle Fabre' at your house. I know that you live somewhere near here in the neighbourhood of St. Jacques du Haut-pas, as you attend Mass there every day, but I do not know in what street. I see that you understand your situation. As you have not lied about your name, you will not lie about your address. Write it yourself."

The prisoner reflected for a moment, and then took up the pen and wrote:—

"Mademoiselle Fabre, at M. Urbain Fabre's, No. 17, Rue St. Dominique d'Enfer."

Thénardier seized the letter with a sort of feverish convulsion.

"Wife!" he shouted, and the woman hastened up. "Here is the letter. You know what you have to do. There is a hackney coach down below, so be off at once, and return ditto."

Then he turned to the man with the pole-axe, and said: "As you have taken off your false nose, you can escort the

missis. Get up behind the coach. You know where you left the go-cart?"

"Yes," said the man. And depositing the axe in a corner, he followed the woman.

As they set off, Thénardier thrust his head through the half-open door, and shouted down the passage:

"Mind you do not lose the letter! Remember, you have two hundred thousand francs about you."

The woman's hoarse voice replied.—

"Don't be frightened; I've put it in my bosom —"

A minute had not elapsed when the crack of a whip was heard rapidly retreating, and dying away in the distance.

"Good!" growled Thénardier; "they are going at a fine pace. At a gallop like that the missis will be back inside of three-quarters of an hour."

He drew a chair to the fireside, and sat down with folded arms, holding his muddy boots to the brazier.

"My feet are cold," he said.

Only five ruffians now remained in the den with Thénardier and the prisoner.

These men, through the masks or soot that covered their faces and made of them, with a choice of horrors, charcoal-burners, negroes, or demons, had a heavy, dull look; and it was plain that they performed a crime like a job, calmly, without passion or pity, and with a sort of weary air. They were crowded up in one corner like brute beasts and were silent.

Thénardier warmed his feet.

The prisoner had relapsed into his taciturnity. A sinister calm had succeeded the wild uproar which had filled the garret a few moments previous.

The candle, on which a large "stranger" had formed, scarce lit up the immense room. The brazier had grown black; and all those monstrous heads cast misshapen shadows upon the walls and ceiling.

No sound was audible save the regular breathing of the old drunkard, who was asleep.

Marius waited in a state of anxiety, which everything tended to increase. The enigma was more impenetrable than ever.

Who was this "little one," whom Thénardier had also called "The Lark"? Was she "his Ursula"? The prisoner had not seemed to be affected by that name, "the Lark," and had answered with the most natural air in the world, "I do not know what you mean." On the other hand, the two letters U. F. were explained. They were Urbain Fabre; and Ursula's name was no longer Ursula. This was what Marius saw most clearly.

A sort of frightful fascination held him nailed to the spot, whence he surveyed and commanded the whole scene. He stood there almost incapable of reflection and movement, as if annihilated by such abominable things viewed so close at hand. He waited, hoping for some incident, no matter what its nature, unable to collect his thoughts, and not knowing what course to take.

"In any case," he said, "if she is the Lark, I shall see her; for Mother Thénardier will bring her here. That will end all; I will give my life and my blood, should it be necessary, to save her! Nothing shall stop me."

Nearly half an hour passed in this way. Thénardier seemed absorbed in dark thoughts, and the prisoner did not stir. Still Marius fancied that at intervals, and for the last few moments, he could hear a low, dull sound in the direction of the prisoner. All at once Thénardier addressed his victim.

"By the way, M. Fabre," he said, "I may as well tell you at once."

As these few words seemed the beginning of an explanation, Marius pricked up his ears.

Thénardier continued:—

"My wife will be back soon, so do not be impatient. I believe that the Lark is really your daughter, and think it quite natural that you should want to keep her; but listen to me for a moment. My wife will go and hunt her up with

your letter. I told Madame Thénardier to dress herself in the way you saw, so that your young lady might make no difficulty about following her. They will both get into the hackney coach with my comrade behind. Somewhere, outside one of the barriers, there is a trap drawn by two excellent horses. Your young lady will be driven up to it in the hackney coach, and get into the trap with my pal, while my wife returns here to report progress. As for your young lady, no harm will be done her. She will be taken to a place where she will be all safe; and so soon as you have handed me the trifle of two hundred thousand francs, she will be restored to you. If you have me arrested, my pal will settle the Lark, that's all."

The prisoner did not utter a word. After a pause Thénardier added:—

"It is simple enough, as you see. There will be no harm done, unless you like to make harm. I have told you all about it, and warned you, that you might know how things stand."

He stopped. The prisoner did not break the silence, and Thénardier added:—

"So soon as my wife returns and says to me, 'The Lark is on the way,' we will release you; and you can sleep at home if you like. You see that we have no ill intentions."

Frightful images passed across the mind of Marius. What! they were not going to bring the girl here! One of the monsters was to carry her off in the darkness! Where? Oh, if it were she!

It was plain that it was she. Marius felt his heart stop beating.

What should he do? Fire the pistol and deliver all these villains into the hands of justice? But the hideous man with the pole-axe would be none the less out of reach with the girl; and Marius thought of Thénardier's words, whose bloody significance he could read: "*If you have me arrested, my pal will settle the Lark.*"

Now he felt himself restrained, not only by the colonel's

will, but by his love, and by the peril of her whom he loved.

This frightful situation, which had already lasted above an hour, changed its aspect every moment.

Marius had the strength to review in turn all the most heart-rending conjectures, seeking hope and finding none.

The tumult of his thoughts contrasted with the funereal silence of the den.

In the midst of this silence the door at the foot of the stairs was heard to open and shut.

The prisoner gave a start in his bonds.

"Here's my missis," said Thénardier.

He had hardly uttered the words when Mother Thénardier rushed into the room, red, out of breath, panting, with flashing eyes, and shouted as she struck her thighs with her two big hands:—

"False address!"

The rascal who had accompanied her appeared behind, and took up his pole-axe again.

"False address?" repeated Thénardier; and she went on:—

"No Monsieur Urbain Fabre known at No. 17, Rue St. Dominique. They never heard of him."

She stopped to snort, and then continued:—

"Monsieur Thénardier, that old cove has made a fool of you. You are too kind-hearted, I keep on telling you. I would have cut his throat to begin with! and if he had sulked, I would have boiled him alive! That would have made him speak and tell us where he keeps the girl, and where he keeps his pile.

"That is how I should have managed the affair. People are perfectly right when they say that men are more stupid than women. Nobody at No. 17. It is a big carriage entrance. No Monsieur Fabre at No. 17! and we tore like mad, and tipped the driver, and all! I spoke to the porter and to his wife, who is a fine, fat woman, and they did not know anybody of the name."

Marius breathed again.

She, Ursula,— or the Lark ; he no longer knew her name,— was saved.

While the exasperated woman vociferated, Thénardier sat down on the table.

For some minutes he said not a word, but swung his right leg to and fro, and looked at the brazier with an air of savage revery.

At last he said to the prisoner, slowly, in a peculiarly ferocious tone:—

“ A false address? Why, what did you expect to gain by that? ”

“ Time! ” thundered the prisoner. And at the same moment he shook off his bonds, which were cut through. The prisoner was now only fastened to the bed by one leg.

Before the seven men had time to collect their senses and to rush forward, he had stooped to the hearth, stretched out his hand to the brazier, then straightened himself up again; and now the Thénardiens and the brigands, driven back by surprise to the end of the room, stared at him in stupid horror, as, almost free, and in a threatening attitude, he waved above his head the red-hot chisel, from which a sinister glare shot.

In the judicial inquiry to which the attempted murder in the Gorbeau House gave rise it was stated that a large copper sou, cut and worked in a peculiar manner, was found in the garret when the police made their descent upon it. It was one of those marvels of industry which the patience of the galleys engenders in the darkness, and for the darkness,— marvels which are nought but instruments of escape. These hideous and yet delicate products of a prodigious art are to the jeweller's work what slang metaphors are to poetry. There are Benvenuto Cellinis in the galleys, as there are Villons in language. The wretch who aspires to escape, finds means, without tools, or, at the most, with an old knife, to saw a sou in halves, hollow out the two parts without injuring the dies, and form a thread in the edge of each part so that they fit together. It screws and unscrews at pleasure, and is a box; and in this box a watchspring saw is concealed, which,

if well managed, will cut through fetters and iron bars. It is believed that the unhappy convict possesses only a sou; not at all, he possesses liberty. It was a sou of this nature which was found by the police under the bed near the window. A small saw of blue steel, which could be easily concealed in the sou, was also discovered.

It is probable that when the bandits searched the prisoner he had the double sou about him, and hid it in his palm. Afterward, his right hand being free, he unscrewed it, and used the saw to cut the ropes which bound him. This would explain the slight noise and the almost imperceptible movements which Marius had noticed.

As, however, he was unable to stoop down for fear of betraying himself, he had not cut the cord on his left leg.

The bandits gradually recovered from their surprise.

"Be easy," said Bigrenaille to Thénardier; "he is still held by one leg and will not fly away. I'll answer for that. I put the pack-thread round that paw."

Here the prisoner raised his voice:—

"You are villains, but my life is not worth the trouble of defending it. As for imagining that you can make me speak, make me write what I do not choose to write, or make me say what I do not choose to say —"

He pulled up his left sleeve and added:—

"Look here!"

At the same time, he stretched out his arm, and placed on the naked flesh the red-hot chisel, which he held in his right hand by the wooden handle.

The frizzling of the burning flesh was heard; and the smell peculiar to torture-rooms, spread through the garret.

Marius reeled in utter horror; the brigands themselves shuddered; but the face of the strange old man was scarce contracted, and while the red-hot steel buried itself in the smoking wound, he — impassive and almost august — fixed on Thénardier his beautiful glance, in which there was no hatred, and in which suffering disappeared in serene majesty.

In great and lofty natures the revolt of the flesh and of

the senses subjected to physical pain, makes the soul shine forth upon the brow, as the mutiny of troops compels the captain to show himself.

"Villains!" he said, "fear me no more than I do you."

And tearing the chisel out of the wound, he hurled it through the window which had been left open. The horrible red-hot tool whirled through the night and fell some distance off in the snow, which hissed at the contact.

The prisoner continued:—

"Do with me as you will."

He was defenceless.

"Seize him," said Thénardier.

Two of the brigands laid their hands on his shoulder, and the masked man with the ventriloquist voice stood in front of him, ready to dash out his brains with a blow of the big key at the slightest movement on his part.

At the same time, Marius heard below him, but so close that he could not see the speakers, the following remarks exchanged in a low voice:—

"There is only one thing to be done."

"Cut his throat!"

"Exactly."

It was the husband and wife holding council.

Thénardier walked slowly to the table, opened the drawer, and took out the knife.

Marius played with the handle of his pistol in a state of extraordinary perplexity. For more than an hour he had heard two voices in his conscience, one telling him to respect his father's will, while the other cried to him to succour the prisoner. These two voices continued their struggle uninterruptedly, and agonized him. Up to this moment he had vaguely hoped to find some mode of reconciling these two duties, but nothing within the bounds of possibility had occurred to him.

Still, the peril was urgent. The last moment of delay was passed. Thénardier, knife in hand, was reflecting a few paces from the prisoner.

Marius looked wildly around him,— the last mechanical resource of despair. All at once he started.

At his feet, on the table, a bright moonbeam lit up and seemed to point out to him a sheet of paper. On that sheet he read this line, written in large letters that very morning by the elder of Thénardier's daughters:

“ HERE ARE THE COPS.”

An idea, a flash, crossed Marius's mind. This was the expedient which he sought, the solution of the frightful problem that tortured him, sparing the assassin and saving the victim.

He knelt down by the chest of drawers, stretched forth his arm, seized the paper, softly detached a lump of plaster from the party-wall, wrapped the paper round it, and threw it through the hole into the middle of the den.

It was high time, for Thénardier had overcome his last fears, or his last scruples, and was advancing on the prisoner.

“ Something fell!” cried his wife.

“ What is it?” asked her husband.

The woman bounded forward, and picked up the lump of plaster wrapped in paper, which she handed to her husband.

“ Where did that come from?” asked Thénardier.

“ Why, hang it!” said his wife, “ where do you suppose it came from? Through the window, of course.”

“ I saw it come,” said Bigrenaille.

Thénardier rapidly unfolded the paper and held it close to the candle.

“ Eponine's handwriting — the devil!”

He signed to his wife, who hurried up to him, and showed her the line written on the paper, then added in a hollow voice:—

“ Quick, the ladder! We must leave the bacon in the mouse-trap and clear out.”

"Without cutting the man's throat?" asked Mother Thénardier.

"We haven't the time."

"Which way?" remarked Bigrenaille.

"By the window," replied Thénardier; "as 'Ponine threw the stone through the window, that's a proof that the house is not beset on that side."

The masked man with the ventriloquist voice laid his big key on the floor, raised his arms in the air, and opened and shut his hands thrice rapidly, without a word.

This was the signal to clear the decks for action aboard ship. The rascals who held the prisoner let him go, and in a twinkling the rope ladder was dropped out of the window and securely fastened to the sill by the two iron hooks.

The prisoner paid no attention to what was going on around him. He seemed to be thinking or praying. So soon as the ladder was fixed, Thénardier cried:—

"Come, the missis first." And he dashed at the window.

But as he was stepping out, Bigrenaille roughly seized him by the collar.

"Not much, I say, my old joker! After us!"

"After us!" yelled the bandits.

"You are children," said Thénardier; "we are losing time, and the bobbies are at our heels."

"Very well, then," said one of the bandits, "let us draw lots to see who shall go first."

Thénardier exclaimed:—

"Are you crazy? Are you cracked? Why, what a set of flats! Lose time, would you? Draw lots, eh?—with a wet finger, a short straw? Write our names! put them in a hat —"

"May I offer my hat?" said a voice at the door.

All turned. It was Javert.

He held his hat in his hand, and offered it smilingly.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PROPER WAY TO BEGIN IS TO ARREST THE VICTIMS

JAVERT posted his men at nightfall, and ambushed himself behind the trees of the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, which faces No. 50-52, on the other side of the boulevard. He had begun by opening his "pocket," and thrusting into it the two girls ordered to watch the approaches to the den. But he had "nailed" only Azelma. As for Eponine, she was not at her post; she had disappeared, and he had not been able to seize her. Then Javert took up his position, and listened for the appointed signal. The departure and return of the hackney coach greatly perplexed him. At length he grew impatient; and feeling sure that there "was a nest there," and that he was in "luck's way," having recognized several of the scoundrels who went in, he resolved to enter without waiting for the pistol-shot.

It will be remembered that he had Marius's latch-key.

He arrived just in the nick of time.

The startled bandits dashed at the weapons which they had thrown into corners at the moment of their attempted escape; and in less than a second these seven men, fearful to behold, were grouped in a posture of defence, one with his pole-axe, another with his key, a third with his bludgeon, the others with shears, pincers, and hammer, and Thénardier with his knife in his fist. The woman picked up an enormous paving-stone which lay in the corner by the window, and served her daughters as a foot-stool.

Javert restored his hat to his head, and walked into the room, with folded arms, his cane under his arm and his sword in its scabbard.

"Halt!" he shouted; "you will not leave by the window, but by the door. It is not so unhealthy. You are seven and

we are fifteen. Do not let us collar each other like water-carriers, but behave like gentlemen."

Bigrenaille drew a pistol from under his blouse and placed it in Thénardier's hand, as he whispered:—

"It is Javert. I dare not fire on that man. Dare you?"

"I should think so," answered Thénardier.

"Well, fire."

Thénardier took the pistol and aimed at Javert.

The inspector, who was only three paces from him, looked him in the eye, and contented himself with saying:—

"Don't fire, for the pistol won't go off."

Thénardier pulled the trigger. There was a flash in the pan.

"Did I not tell you so?" remarked Javert.

Bigrenaille threw his bludgeon at Javert's feet.

"You are the emperor of the devils! I surrender."

"And you?" Javert asked the other bandits.

They answered: "So do we."

Javert remarked calmly:—

"That is all right; I said so. You are good fellows."

"I only ask one thing," remarked Bigrenaille,—“that my baccy mayn't be stopped while I'm in solitary confinement."

"Agreed," said Javert.

Then he turned and shouted:—

"You can come in now."

A squad of police, sword in hand, and assistants armed with bludgeons and sticks, rushed in at Javert's summons and bound the robbers.

This crowd of men, scarce illumined by the one candle, filled the den with shadows.

"Handcuff them all," cried Javert.

"Come on if you dare," shouted a voice, which was not that of a man, but of which no one could have said, "It is a woman's voice."

Mother Thénardier had intrenched herself in one of the angles of the window, and it was she who uttered this roar.

The police and their aids fell back.

She had thrown off her shawl, and kept on her bonnet; her husband, crouching behind her, almost disappeared under the shawl, and she covered him with her body, as she raised the paving-stone above her head with both hands, like a giantess about to heave a rock.

"Heads below!" she screeched.

All retreated into the passage. A large open space was cleared in the centre of the garret.

The hag cast a glance at the bandits, who had suffered themselves to be bound, and muttered in a hoarse and guttural voice:—

"Cowards!"

Javert smiled, and advanced into the open space which the woman guarded with her eyes.

"Don't come near me," she shrieked, "or I'll smash you! Be off!"

"What a grenadier!" said Javert. "I say, mother! you have a beard like a man, but I have claws like a woman."

And he continued to advance.

Mother Thénardier, with flying hair and terrible looks, straddled her legs, bent back, and wildly hurled the paving-stone at Javert's head. He stooped; the stone passed over him, struck the wall, from which it dislodged a mass of plaster, and then rebounded across the den, luckily almost empty, till it fell at Javert's feet.

At the same moment, Javert reached the Thénardiens. One of his large hands settled on the wife's shoulder, the other on the husband's head.

"Handcuffs here!" he shouted.

The policemen flocked in, and in a few seconds Javert's orders were carried out.

The woman, quite crushed, looked at her own and her husband's manacled hands, sank to the ground, and bursting into tears, cried:—

"My daughters!"

"They are in quod," said Javert.

By this time the police had discovered the drunken man asleep behind the door, and were shaking him.

He woke up and stammered:—

“Is it all over, Jondrette?”

“Yes,” answered Javert.

The six bound bandits were standing together, with their spectral faces, three daubed with black, and three masked.

“Keep on your masks,” said Javert.

And passing them in review, like Frederick II. at a Potsdam parade, he said to the three “smoke-doctors”:

“How are you, Bigrenaille? Hullo, Brujon. How are you, Two Millions?”

Then turning to the three masks, he said to the man with the pole-axe, “Good-evening, Gueulemer,” and to the man with the cudgel, “Good-evening, Babet,” and to the ventriloquist, “Your health, Claquesous.”

Just then he saw the prisoner, who had not said a word since the arrival of the police, and held his head down.

“Untie the gentleman,” said Javert, “and let no one leave the room.”

So saying, he sat down in a lordly way at the table, on which the candle and the inkstand were still standing, took a stamped paper from his pocket, and began to write his report.

When he had written the first lines, which are always the same formula, he raised his eyes.

“Let the gentleman whom these gentlemen tied up step forward.”

The policemen looked around.

“Well,” asked Javert, “where is he?”

The prisoner of the bandits, M. Leblanc, M. Urbain Fabre, the father of Ursula or the Lark, had disappeared.

The door was guarded, but the window was not. So soon as he found himself free, and while Javert was writing, he took advantage of the confusion, the tumult, the crowd, the darkness, and of a moment when attention was not fixed upon him, to spring out of the window.

A policeman ran to the window and looked out. He saw nobody; but the rope ladder was still vibrating.

"The devil!" said Javert between his teeth; "he must have been the best of the lot."

XXII

THE CHILD WHO CRIED IN VOLUME SECOND

ON the day after that on which these events occurred in the house on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, a lad, who apparently came from the bridge of Austerlitz, was trudging along the right-hand walk in the direction of the Barrière de Fontainebleau, at nightfall.

This boy was pale, thin, dressed in rags, wearing canvas trousers in the month of February, and singing at the top of his lungs.

At the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier, an old woman was stooping down, rummaging in a pile of garbage by the light of the street-lantern; the lad ran against her as he passed, and fell back, with the exclamation:

"My eye! Why, I took that for an enormous, ENORMOUS dog."

He uttered the word *enormous* the second time with a sonorous twang, which might be expressed by capitals; "an enormous, ENORMOUS dog."

The old woman drew herself up in a fury.

"You young devil!" she growled, "if I had not been stooping I know where my foot would be now."

The lad was already some distance off.

"K'ss! k'ss!" he said; "after that, perhaps I was not mistaken."

The old woman, choked with indignation, drew herself up to her full height, and the red glow of the street-lan-

tern fully lit up her livid face, which was hollowed into angles and wrinkles, with crows'-feet at the corners of her mouth. Her body was lost in the darkness, and her head alone could be seen; she looked like a mask of decrepitude carved out by a flash of lightning from the night.

The laù looked at her.

"Madame," he said, "yours is not the style of beauty which would suit me."

He went his way, and began singing again:—

"King Coupdesabot
Went a-hunting one day,
A-hunting the crow."

At the end of these three lines he broke off. He had reached No. 50-52, and finding the door closed, he began to attack it with re-echoing and heroic kicks, which indicated rather the man's shoes which he wore than the boy's feet which he had.

By this time, the same old woman whom he had met at the corner of the Rue du Petit Banquier ran up after him, uttering loud shouts, and making the most extraordinary gestures.

"What's the matter? What's the matter? O Lord God! He will break down the door! He will break into the house!"

The kicks continued, and the old woman yelled herself hoarse:—

"Is that the way to treat a house?"

All at once she stopped, for she recognized the gutter-snipe.

"Why, it is that imp!"

"Hullo! it's the old lady," said the boy. "Good-evening, Bougonmuche; I have come to see my ancestors."

The old woman answered with a composite grimace, an admirable instance of hatred taking advantage of old age and ugliness, which was unfortunately lost in the darkness: "There's nobody here, scamp."

"Nonsense!" said the boy; "where's my father?"

"At La Force."

"Hullo! and mother?"

"At Saint Lazare."

"Very fine! and my sisters?"

"At the Madelonnettes."

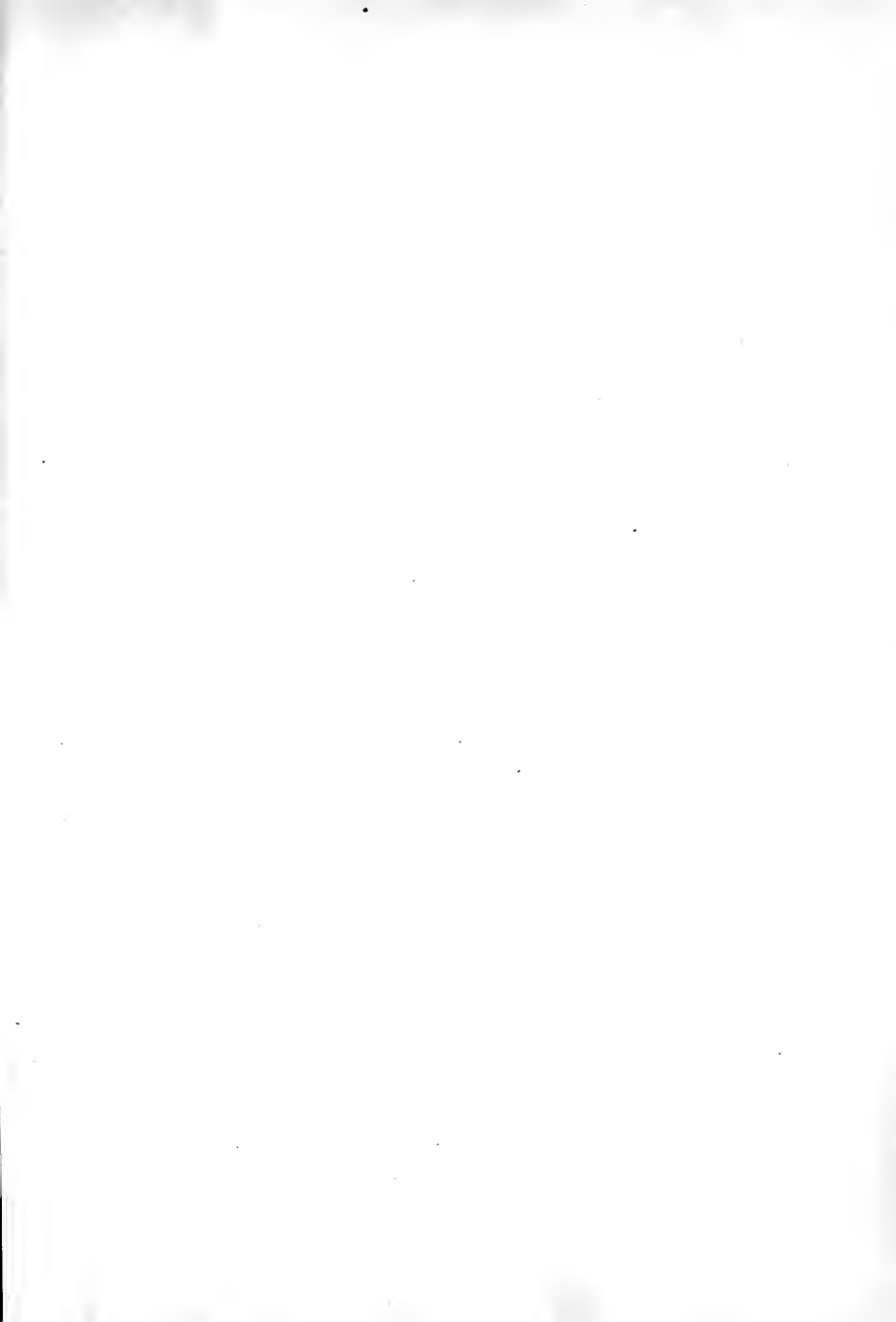
The lad scratched the back of his ear, looked at Ma'am Bougon, and said, "Ah!"

Then he turned on his heel, and a moment later the old woman, who was standing on the doorstep, heard him singing in his clear young voice, as he went off under the dark elms, which shivered in the winter breeze:—

"King Coupdesabot
Went a-hunting one day,
A-hunting the crow,
On two waders, they say;
You'd two coppers to pay
If you went by that way."

END OF VOL. III.





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